



Brussels, 7 July 2026  
(OR. en, fr, es)

11572/26

VISA 74  
COMIX 163  
CH  
IS  
LI  
NO

**NOTE**

---

From: Commission services

To: Visa Working Party / Mixed Committee (EU-Iceland/Norway and Switzerland/Liechtenstein)

---

No. prev. doc.: 9531/25

---

Subject: Local Schengen cooperation between Member States' consulates (Article 48(7) of the Visa Code)  
- Compilation of 2025 annual reports

---

Delegations will find attached the annual reports drawn up in the local Schengen cooperation, as transmitted by the services of the Commission.

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC)****ANNUAL REPORTS – 2025****Table of contents**

<b>ALBANIA</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>ALGERIE</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>ARMENIA</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>AUSTRALIA</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>AZERBAIJAN</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>BANGLADESH</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>BELARUS</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>BRAZIL</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b>BURKINA FASO</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<b>BURUNDI</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>CABO VERDE</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>CAMEROUN</b> .....	<b>45</b>
<b>CANADA</b> .....	<b>48</b>
<b>CHINA</b> .....	<b>51</b>
<b>COLOMBIA</b> .....	<b>55</b>
<b>CONGO</b> .....	<b>58</b>
<b>CÔTE D’IVOIRE</b> .....	<b>62</b>
<b>CUBA</b> .....	<b>66</b>
<b>DOMINICAN REPUBLIC</b> .....	<b>70</b>
<b>ECUADOR</b> .....	<b>74</b>
<b>EGYPT</b> .....	<b>77</b>
<b>ETHIOPIA</b> .....	<b>80</b>
<b>GEORGIA</b> .....	<b>82</b>
<b>GHANA</b> .....	<b>85</b>
<b>GUATEMALA</b> .....	<b>89</b>
<b>HONG KONG AND MACAO</b> .....	<b>91</b>
<b>INDIA</b> .....	<b>94</b>
<b>INDONESIA</b> .....	<b>99</b>
<b>IRAQ</b> .....	<b>103</b>
<b>ISRAEL</b> .....	<b>105</b>
<b>KAZAKHSTAN</b> .....	<b>108</b>
<b>KENYA</b> .....	<b>114</b>
<b>REPUBLIC OF KOREA</b> .....	<b>117</b>
<b>KOSOVO</b> .....	<b>122</b>
<b>KUWAIT</b> .....	<b>127</b>
<b>KYRGYZSTAN</b> .....	<b>130</b>
<b>LEBANON</b> .....	<b>134</b>
<b>MADAGASCAR</b> .....	<b>137</b>
<b>MALAYSIA</b> .....	<b>141</b>

<b>MALI</b> .....	<b>143</b>
<b>MAURITANIE</b> .....	<b>147</b>
<b>MONGOLIA</b> .....	<b>151</b>
<b>MEXICO</b> .....	<b>154</b>
<b>MONTENEGRO</b> .....	<b>157</b>
<b>MOROCCO</b> .....	<b>160</b>
<b>MOZAMBIQUE</b> .....	<b>164</b>
<b>MYANMAR</b> .....	<b>168</b>
<b>NAMIBIA</b> .....	<b>171</b>
<b>NEPAL</b> .....	<b>175</b>
<b>NIGERIA</b> .....	<b>177</b>
<b>NORTH MACEDONIA</b> .....	<b>182</b>
<b>PAKISTAN</b> .....	<b>185</b>
<b>PALESTINE</b> .....	<b>189</b>
<b>PANAMÁ</b> .....	<b>192</b>
<b>PERU</b> .....	<b>195</b>
<b>PHILIPPINES</b> .....	<b>199</b>
<b>QATAR</b> .....	<b>202</b>
<b>RUSSIAN FEDERATION</b> .....	<b>205</b>
<b>RWANDA</b> .....	<b>207</b>
<b>SAUDI ARABIA</b> .....	<b>212</b>
<b>SENEGAL</b> .....	<b>215</b>
<b>SERBIA</b> .....	<b>221</b>
<b>SOUTH AFRICA</b> .....	<b>225</b>
<b>SRI LANKA AND THE MALDIVES</b> .....	<b>229</b>
<b>TAIWAN</b> .....	<b>231</b>
<b>TANZANIA</b> .....	<b>233</b>
<b>THAILAND</b> .....	<b>235</b>
<b>TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO</b> .....	<b>238</b>
<b>TUNISIA</b> .....	<b>242</b>
<b>TÜRKIYE</b> .....	<b>246</b>
<b>TURKMENISTAN</b> .....	<b>251</b>
<b>UNITED ARAB EMIRATES</b> .....	<b>254</b>
<b>UGANDA</b> .....	<b>257</b>
<b>UNITED KINGDOM</b> .....	<b>261</b>
<b>UNITED STATES OF AMERICA</b> .....	<b>265</b>
<b>UZBEKISTAN</b> .....	<b>268</b>
<b>VIETNAM</b> .....	<b>271</b>
<b>ZAMBIA</b> .....	<b>274</b>



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN ALBANIA**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

In 2025, sixteen Member States had diplomatic representations in Albania and six (Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, and Slovakia) were represented by other Member States for Schengen visas.

Some of the Member States represented in Albania do not issue Schengen visas in Albania but in neighbouring countries.

Among non-EU Schengen countries, only Switzerland has a diplomatic representation in Tirana but does not issue visas there.

Outside Tirana, Greece has two General Consulates (Gjirokastra and Korca). Italy has a General Consulate in Vlora, Slovenia has a General Consulate in Durres.

Several EU Member States represented in Tirana also have Honorary Consuls outside the capital: Austria (Shkodra, Vlora), Bulgaria (Vlora), Czech Republic (Saranda), Hungary (Vlora and Durres), Italy (Gjirokastra, Shkodra) Romania (Korca), Slovakia (Tirana) and Slovenia (Durres). Italy also has one Consular Correspondent in Berat.

Some Member States without an Embassy in Albania have Honorary Consulates: Belgium (Lushnja), Denmark (Tirana), Estonia (Tirana), Finland (Tirana), Lithuania (Tirana), Malta (Tirana) and Portugal (Tirana).

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

While there were no significant developments or specific concerns in terms of issuing Schengen visas in Albania, the EU Delegation organised and chaired two hybrid meeting of the Local Schengen Cooperation: on 23 June and 18 September, which were well attended and organised back-to-back with the Local Consular Cooperation meetings. The agendas were prepared by the EU Delegation with input from Member States. The meeting of 18 September 2025 was fully dedicated to the entry into force of the Entry-Exit System (EES) in order to discuss open questions and coordinate the approach in terms of public messaging.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

On 3 December 2021, The Commission Implementing Decision *C(2021) 8657 Establishing the list of supporting documents to be submitted by applicants for short stay visas in Albania and in Nepal* was adopted. This marked a significant deliverable for the LSC group in Albania in implementing the revised Visa Code and concluded a period of intense exchanges among LSC members to draw-up the draft list. All Member States have started to apply the list since December 2021.

#### **3.2 Exchange of information**

LSC continues to provide a platform for Member States to exchange experience on their consular functions in Albania on statistics, trends, and cases of document fraud, and exchange information on the functioning of the Schengen system.

Based on the information received from Member States, the approval rate of all uniform visa applications lodged (including MEV) stood at 93%, similar to the previous year (90%). Several Member States had a larger number of inquiries than the actual applications. In most of these cases the inquiries were from people who did not have a residence permit in Albania and their application would therefore be inadmissible. No specific issues in terms of Schengen visa applications from Russian citizens.

Before the rollout of the Entry-Exit System, the EU Delegation shared with Member States the communication material received from HQ (infographics, leaflet, poster), which the Delegation translated into Albanian, provided information related to the rollout, and directed Member States to share information from the dedicated official website via their own channels. Member States in turn informed the EU Delegation on their rollout plans, to the extent available.

#### **3.3 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

Since no major changes of trends or other particular issues were signalled in 2025, the exchanges largely focused on less LSC-specific, but still related topics of migration flows, asylum applications by the Albanian citizens in EUMS, the entry into force of the Entry-Exit System, developments in the area of EU visa policy, and Albania's alignment with the EU's list of visa-free and visa exempt countries, which remained an issue of great interest to Member States.

#### 4. Challenges

Challenges set out in the European Commission's 2025 annual visa suspension mechanism report will continue to be addressed by the LSC, in particular the lack of visa policy alignment, which raises potential risks in terms of irregular migration and security, unfounded applications by Albanian citizens in the EU, and overstays by Albanian nationals in the Schengen area.

Detailed sharing of information and awareness raising, with common or coordinated messages, will need to accompany the future entry into force of ETIAS. While the concerns expressed by the road transport sector representatives in the region related to the rollout of the EES, including professional truck drivers' protests, were less prominent in Albania, this is also an issue that will need to be monitored.



16 février 2026

**COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET  
LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC)**

**ALGERIE**

**RAPPORT 2025**

**1. Introduction**

Vingt-trois (22) Etats Membres<sup>1</sup> sont présents en Algérie (AT, BE, BG, CH, CZ, DE, DK, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IT, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK). En dehors de la capitale Alger, FR et ES disposent de consulats à Oran, et FR à Annaba. Pour la délivrance des visas, AT, BE, CZ, DE, ES, HU, NO et PL représentent, respectivement SI, LU, SK, LT, EE, LV, IS et SE. SK a ouvert une ambassade dans le courant de l'année. Les deux Etats Membres de l'UE qui ne font pas partie de la zone Schengen, IE et CY, ne sont pas présents en Algérie.

Le présent rapport a été approuvé par les Etats Membres présents en Algérie.

**2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2025**

En 2025, neuf réunions LSC ont eu lieu. La participation des Etats Membres est généralement élevée : la majorité des Etats Membres prennent part aux réunions de façon régulière. La Délégation de l'UE préside les réunions et rédige les rapports, qui sont ensuite partagés avec les Etats Membres. Les équipes des consulats en dehors d'Alger sont depuis 2025 régulièrement invités à participer aux réunions en visioconférence ; ils reçoivent par courriel les informations relatives aux activités du groupe LSC.

**3. État des lieux**

**3.1 Application du Code des Visas**

En 2025, les Etats Membres et la Délégation de l'UE ont continué leur coopération, qu'on peut qualifier d'étroite, régulière et efficace, en conformité avec les dispositions du Code des Visas et les recommandations des manuels des visas. En complément aux réunions LSC, qui ont lieu avec cadence

---

<sup>1</sup> Etats Membres = pays Schengen

mensuelle, la coopération se poursuit par d'échanges d'emails et à travers une application de messagerie instantanée.

Les problèmes spécifiques liés aux opérations de visas en application du Code de Visas tels qu'ils ont été discutés lors des réunions LSC concernent notamment : la fraude documentaire ; le rôle des intermédiaires sur le système de prise de rendez-vous et les stratégies mises en place par les Etats Membres pour minimiser leur impact ; le phénomène du « visa shopping ».

Les consulats des Etats Membres sont très souvent confrontés à des demandeurs qui soumettent leur dossier auprès des services consulaires d'un Etat Membre alors qu'il ressort du dossier ou bien de leurs demandes de visa précédentes que la destination principale de leur voyage serait, en réalité, un autre Etat Membre.

Des intermédiaires (agences de voyage, cybercafés, etc.) réservent les rendez-vous en ligne dès qu'ils sont rendus disponibles sur les sites des consulats ou de leurs prestataires. Ces intermédiaires vendent ensuite aux demandeurs les rendez-vous, et proposent souvent d'autres « services » qui incluent la constitution de dossiers de visa et parfois la fabrication de documents falsifiés. Tout cela impacte négativement les opérations, en rendant indisponibles les rendez-vous en ligne et contribuant à la mauvaise qualité des dossiers.

Les Etats Membres et leurs prestataires travaillent pour s'attaquer à ce phénomène ; certains d'entre eux ont modifié leurs systèmes de prise de rendez-vous pour empêcher l'intervention d'intermédiaires, par exemple en minimisant la possibilité de choisir un créneau de rendez-vous, ou en introduisant des outils de reconnaissance faciale qui permettent de vérifier l'identité du demandeur au moment de l'enregistrement en ligne et du rendez-vous même.

Les Etats Membres sont confrontés à des niveaux importants de fraude documentaire, avec des graves conséquences sur l'efficacité du travail des services consulaires qui doivent déployer des efforts et des ressources considérables dans la détection des faux documents. Ce phénomène contribue également au niveau élevé du taux de refus.

### **3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs**

En 2025, les Etats Membres ont continué à assurer l'application de la liste des documents justificatifs devant être présentés par les demandeurs de visa de court séjour en Algérie, adoptée le 26 août 2021 par une décision d'exécution de la Commission européenne, suite aux discussions au sein du groupe LSC en 2019 et 2020. La liste est disponible sur les sites des consulats ou de leurs prestataires.

### **3.3 Estimation du besoin d'adapter les règles générales relatives à la délivrance des visas à entrées multiples aux demandeurs en vertu de l'Article 24(2) du Code des Visas (« cascades MEV »)**

La décision d'exécution de la Commission européenne portant sur l'adaptation locale en Algérie de la cascade pour les visas à entrées multiples a été adoptée le 5 janvier 2022, suite aux discussions au sein du groupe LSC en 2020.

Les Etats Membres présents en Algérie sont informés du contenu de l'Article 24(2) du Code des Visas et de l'adaptation locale de la cascade.

Alors que l'automatisme de la cascade a été limité à la délivrance des visas de deux ans, certains Etats Membres délivrent, en vertu de l'article 24 (2 quater) du Code des Visas, des visas à entrées multiples d'une durée de validité allant jusqu'à cinq ans à des demandeurs faisant preuve de leur intégrité et de leur fiabilité.

### **3.4 Harmonisation des procédures**

Pas d'autres initiatives réalisées relevant de l'harmonisation des procédures.

### **3.5 Echange d'informations**

La Délégation de l'UE coordonne la collecte des statistiques auprès des Etats Membres, et les consolide sur la base du format partagé par le siège. Les statistiques et les tendances sont discutées lors des réunions du groupe.

En 2025, les services consulaires des Etats Membres ont traité ca. 445 000 demandes de visa Schengen, et délivré ca. 310 000 visas Schengen. Le volume des demandes traitées et des visas délivrés a diminué significativement par rapport à 2024 (-18% de demandes traitées et -9% de visas délivrés), et s'atteste autour des niveaux de 2023 (-5% de demandes traitées et +3% de visas délivrés).

Lors des réunions, les principaux sujets abordés incluent : les échanges sur les statistiques, les modalités de prise de rendez-vous, le phénomène du « visa shopping », les taux de refus, et la lutte contre la fraude documentaire. Ce dernier sujet fait depuis plusieurs années l'objet d'un effort particulier dans le groupe.

L'échange d'informations permet aux Etats Membres de répondre de façon plus efficace aux problèmes récurrents et communs. Grâce aux échanges au sein de réunions LSC, les participants peuvent se renseigner sur les mesures prises par d'autres services consulaires pour contrer le rôle des intermédiaires dans la prise de rendez-vous, et peuvent s'en inspirer pour étudier des mesures similaires. En matière de lutte contre la fraude documentaire, l'échange d'informations et d'expériences permet d'identifier certaines fraudes répétitives et d'apprendre comment coopérer avec des entités locales susceptibles d'aider à détecter les faux documents (banques, sécurité sociale, etc.).

### **3.6 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC**

En 2025, le groupe a décidé d'analyser plus en détail les différentes typologies de document de support et les risques de fraude liés à chacun (analyse étalée sur six séances de réunion).

Pendant l'été, la Délégation a activé sur ses médias sociaux une campagne de communication sur les opérations de visas et la fraude qui avait été conçue par le groupe.

#### **4. Défis**

Plusieurs Etats Membres ont continué, en 2025, à exprimer leurs préoccupations relatives à l'étendue et à l'impact des phénomènes du « visa shopping » et de la fraude documentaire en Algérie. Ceux-ci continueront à représenter des défis tout au long de l'année 2026.

La coopération et l'échange d'informations, au sein du groupe LSC et de façon bilatérale entre les Etats Membres concernés, restera un outil essentiel pour faire face à ces défis et pour mitiger, dans la mesure du possible, leurs conséquences.

#### **5. Divers**

Rien à signaler.



## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN ARMENIA**

### **2025 REPORT**

#### **1. Introduction**

15 Member States (MS) have resident embassies/ official (non-honorary) representations in Armenia. Among non-Schengen countries, Cyprus has a diplomatic mission that since 1 November issues visa via an external service provider in Yerevan. There are 8 MS (*Bulgaria, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia*) issuing Schengen visas on the spot.

For visa purposes, apart from their own countries, they represent:

**France** represents Iceland, Norway, and Portugal;

**Germany** represents Belgium, Luxembourg, and Sweden;

**Italy** represents Finland and Malta;

**Lithuania** represents Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Netherlands and Spain;

**Poland** represents Slovenia, and Switzerland;

**Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia** and **Greece** issue Schengen visa only to their respective countries;

**Lithuania, Greece, Austria, Italy, France and Germany** co-operate with external service providers: VFS Global (LT, EL, AT) and TLS Contact (IT, FR, DE).

#### **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

Four LSC meetings took place in the reporting period, i.e. on 26 March, 24 June, 10 September and 3 December. All four meetings were organised and chaired by the EU Delegation (EUD). The attendance rate was high. Resident embassies with active consul sections were represented at all four meetings, occasionally also joined by consuls non-resident in Armenia (AT, EE, ES, HU, NO). On 24 June, the meeting was held in a special format attended by HoMs and consuls, due to the importance of issues in implementation of the Visa Facilitation Agreements for relations between Armenia and the EU. On 10 September, one item of LSC was joined by AM MFA representatives. Reports were drafted by EUD and shared with participants. EUD has updated its consular Signal list for 2025.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Member States and EUD were generally prepared to ensure that tasks in the LSC were carried out in accordance with the Schengen Visa Code and the Visa Facilitation Agreement, amid a noted rise in demand for Schengen visas and an overall increase in the number of visas issued. Nonetheless, applicants reportedly faced difficulties, particularly due to long processing times for tourist visas. Additional challenges were attributed to the widespread use of intermediary agencies distorting information provided in visa applications, and automated bots that book appointment slots in bulk, contributing to appointment no-shows, and applicants provided false information on the main country of destination.

The Armenian side requested that the consuls should use their discretion more to the advantage of bona fide (reliable and integral) applicants, also in terms of longer validity of multiple-entry visas issued. The need for a transparent display of information on visa fee exemptions, undue fees for transfer of visa applications, and requirements of supporting documents beyond the harmonised list was also addressed.

In response to these challenges, several measures were reported as having contributed to improvements during the year. Some MS indicated that increasing consular staff and outsourcing certain procedures to external service providers had enhanced efficiency while clearer instructions improved the quality of submissions. Examples of technical tools used by consulates (e.g. lottery systems and deposits linked to applicants' names when booking appointments) were presented as a means to avoid abuse by unscrupulous travel agencies. The Signal group of consuls was also updated to encourage exchanges in addition to LSC. Nonetheless, the need for more consistent practices among consular offices was observed, with further coordination deemed necessary to prevent visa shopping.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

MS have not signalled a need to harmonise the existing list of supporting documents.

#### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

MS have not signalled a need to adapt the rules on the issuing of the multiple-entry visas set out in Article 24(2) of the Visa Code to take account of local circumstances, and of migratory and security risks, in view of the adoption of more favourable or more restrictive rules.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

The EUD has launched a compilation of good consular practices developed by LSC participants with the aim to serve as a reference tool to help streamline processes and promote consistent implementation.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

The EUD launched the quarterly exercise of collections of visa statistics by local consulates issuing Schengen visas (covering uniform visas, visas with limited territorial validity, and airport transit visas applied for, issued, and refused), in line with Article 48(3)(a) of the Schengen Visa Code. The collected statistics share as a basis for evidence-based discussion in LSC.

Information was exchanged on a number of additional issues, in particular:

- cases of fraudulent declarations of travel destination in the Schengen area (indicating the MS of landing, rather than the actual main country of destination)
- operation of intermediary agencies or bots booking appointments in bulk
- instances of individuals presenting themselves as an intermediary and submitting visa requests for groups allegedly attending cultural events, some of which appeared not to be genuine
- indications that tourist visas may at times be misused for medical purposes
- particularities in different MS explaining the divergencies between visa refusal rate
- progress in the EU-Armenia Visa Liberalisation Dialogue

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

N/A

## **4. Challenges**

- enhance exchange of good consular practices which could lead to streamlining visa applications processing, especially for bona fide applicants,
- explore possibilities for increasing the number of multi-entry visas with longer validity, notably issued to the categories covered by the VFA
- explore technical solutions regarding booking the appointments for visas to limit abuses
- increase consistency of practices among consular offices to prevent visa shopping
- benefit from the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI) which offers financial support to EU consular services, through national programming
- explore the possibility to increase consular staff
- launch a communication campaign in cooperation with Armenian authorities to increase quality of applications and reduce activities of unscrupulous intermediary agencies

**5. Other issues**

N/A



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO AUSTRALIA

10 February 2026

## LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN AUSTRALIA 2025 REPORT

### 1. Introduction

26 EU MS (all but LU) and 27 Schengen countries (AT, BE, BG, CZ, HR, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IT, LI, LT, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE, NO and CH) are represented in Canberra. LSC group meetings are held back-to-back with the Consular Group (LCC), a formula that has been working well since its inception in 2013 (since 2014, non-EU-Schengen Members can also attend the Consular Group meeting as observers, following local agreement in this sense).

### 2. LSC meetings held in 2025

Two LSC meetings were held in 2025. The meetings were well attended with participation by LSC members in locations outside Canberra through hybrid meetings. The Head of the Political, Press and Information Section of EUDEL chaired the meetings. No *ad hoc* meetings were organised on specific subjects. Draft minutes were prepared by EUDEL and shared with MS for approval and subsequently submitted to HQ. Schengen countries normally share these minutes with their HQ.

### 3. State of play

#### 3.1 Application of the Visa Code

According to our information, EUDEL has previously shared with MS the information pertaining to the revised Visa Code and the Visa Code Handbook. No apparent problems seem to have arisen.

#### 3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

According to our information, all Schengen countries represented in Australia have included on their websites the correct information regarding the list of supporting documents to be submitted by applicants of short stay visas in Australia (as per Commission Decision C (2017) 5853).

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

Some embassies have expressed difficulties in gathering data on multiple-entry visas.

There is a *de facto* agreement in place among Schengen countries to share information if they feel a candidate may be "shopping" around, but no suggestion to harmonise visa-issuing practices: at this stage this is not considered necessary (small number of visa applications for most Schengen countries, hence low security risk).

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

No other initiatives taken to ensure harmonisation of practices.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Historically, visa data was collected by embassies in Canberra led by the EU Council Presidency. However, this has not been the case in 2025. Some embassies in Australia have expressed difficulties gathering data on single- and multiple-entry visas.

EUDEL shares information with Schengen countries on a regular basis.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

No other initiatives taken.

## **4. Challenges**

No particular challenges were mentioned by MS during 2025.

## **5. Other issues**

No other issues.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO AZERBAIJAN

## LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN AZERBAIJAN 2025 REPORT

### 1. Introduction

There are **20 EU Member States' diplomatic missions**, accredited to Azerbaijan<sup>2</sup>. Among non-EU Schengen countries, **Switzerland** has a diplomatic mission in Baku.

**Fifteen Schengen countries** issue visas in Azerbaijan: **Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia** as well as **Switzerland**.

**Twelve Schengen countries** are represented in visa matters by other Schengen countries: **Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain and Sweden** are represented by **France**; **Estonia and Slovenia** are represented by **Latvia**; **Finland** is represented by **Lithuania**; **Malta** is represented by **Italy**. The Norwegian Embassy in Ankara represents **Denmark and Iceland**.

The majority of LSC members use **external service providers**. One MS (Germany) changed his provider from Visametric to TLScontact in June 2025. Member States have proposed drawing up a list of these service providers, for ease of reference.

The reporting period covers the eleventh year of the implementation of the **EU-Azerbaijan Visa Facilitation Agreement** (signed on 29 November 2013 and entered into force on 1 September 2014). Azerbaijan is **one of the thirteen** countries in the world that has an effective Visa Facilitation Agreement (VFA) with the EU.

Statistical data shows that **Azerbaijani citizens** have largely benefitted from the provisions of the Agreement.

Cross-border mobility of EU citizens across Azerbaijan's land (and maritime) borders continued to be limited in 2025, due to their persistent closure since March 2020, under a special regime that is extended every four months without any indication as to its end.

---

<sup>2</sup> Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Malta and Slovenia have their diplomatic representations accredited outside of Azerbaijan.

## 2. LSC meetings held in 2025

LSC meetings were held **four times** at **EU Delegation's premises** (February, June, September, November) and were chaired by the Delegation's political officer / consular correspondent. The meetings were well attended. Non-LSC EU Member States were invited to, and sometimes participated in, these meetings as **observers**, upon common agreement of the LSC members.

Local LSC group regularly exchanged non-sensitive information via a dedicated **whatsapp group**.

**Visa-related statistics** were shared by Schengen countries through a protected shared document, in which each diplomatic mission insert relevant data autonomously. The system was introduced in early-2025 and has been used by most issuing countries in a timely manner.

## 3. State of play

### 3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The Visa Code has been applied by the relevant Embassies in Azerbaijan.

It has proven difficult, for certain diplomatic missions, to provide applicants with appointments within the requisite two week-deadline throughout the year, as provided by the Visa Code.

Certain LSC countries less affected by this issue have related that, as a consequence, they have faced an increased number of applications ('visa shopping'). Since many such applications tend not to be in conformity with the Visa Code, this has led to a higher refusal rate than in the past, for these countries.

### 3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

All LSC countries represented in Azerbaijan have included on their websites information regarding the list of supporting documents to be submitted by prospective visa applicants.

A few LSC countries floated the idea of a possible update and revision of the harmonised list of documents in the future.

### 3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')

The topic was regularly discussed at the LSC meetings, with all Schengen countries reporting that they have duly implemented the „MEV cascade rule“ in accordance with Article 24(2) of the Visa Code. Several Embassies pointed out that misuse of visas by the visa holders have been recorded in

a number of cases, which led to shorter visa validity, or the denial of a multiple-entry visa, in subsequent applications.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

The LSC discussed and implemented harmonised practices regarding, among other things:

- cooperation with local authorities and companies (e.g. banks, employers, transport companies). A presentation by one of the largest AZ banks about QR code-guaranteed statements was organised at the autumn LSC meeting. Further cooperation with this bank is envisaged.
- cooperation with external service providers and monitoring (including initiatives on common monitoring exercises)
- a coordinated response to visa-shopping issues
- the increased number of ‘high-quality’ fraudulent applications and forged documents.
- the introduction of electronic certificates within the harmonised list of documents
- the appointment system, the problem of “no-shows” and counter-measures, notably the introduction of waiting lists by several Consulates, which has greatly reduced waiting time and complaints among the users.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

LSC countries shared information on visa statistics, visa trends and visa processing at all meetings. A shared document was created, which allows each Consulate monthly to upload directly its data in an excel table, with no need to send them to a ‘collecting point’.

Visa handling capacity has increased but certain critical issues remain, notably the difficulty in complying with the deadlines as regards the granting of a visa appointment.

LSC countries regularly exchanged information regarding cases of fraud in visa applications.

LSC countries reiterated their outstanding complaint that VISMail and Visa Information System were not user friendly and that they have become a significant impediment to the smooth running of visa processing.

As regards cooperation with external service providers, LSC countries regularly exchanged relevant information on their experience.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

None.

### **4. Challenges**

LSC member states will continue to exchange information and adjust their respective visa handling capacities, in line with their commitments under the EU-Azerbaijan Visa Facilitation Agreement.

LSC members will continue to exchange information regarding any issues with visa appointments, in particular “no-shows”, parallel/multiple visa applications, increasingly high visa refusal rates as well as the use of counterfeit and forged documents in visa applications.

### **5. Other issues**

There have been no meetings of the EU-Azerbaijan Joint Visa Facilitation Committee since the Committee was last held on 23 November 2023 in Baku.

The latest EU-Azerbaijan Joint Readmission Committee took place in Baku in July 2024, with no meetings in 2025.

25/02/2025



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN BANGLADESH**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

10 Member States (CH, DE, DK, FR, ES, HU, IT, NL, NO, SE) are present and 18 are represented in Dhaka (AT, BE, CZ, EE, EL, FI, HU, ISL, LI, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, SK, SL).

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

The EU Delegation (Head of Administration and Political Officer) chairs the LSC meetings and draws up the reports.

Meetings are usually scheduled three or four times a year, with the possibility of additional ad hoc meetings if an urgent need arises. Three meetings were held in 2025 (March, July, December).

Meetings are generally well attended. The meetings were held physically at the EU Delegation and a number of Member States representations, with the hybrid option of attending via WebEx if requested.

Member states confirmed their wish to continue holding regular meetings. As there are additional exchanges via WhatsApp /Signal groups, and email in between meetings a more frequent LSC meeting schedule is not necessary. Furthermore, many participants also meet in other formats (Admin, Consular, DHoM, Security).

**3. State of play**

**3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Member states and EU Delegation are well prepared to ensure the tasks to be carried out in LSC under the Visa Code and no specific problems relating to the implementation of the Visa Code focusing on the revised rules applicable since February 2020 have been reported.

Some member states have reported challenges to respect the deadlines set by the Visa Code for the different steps of the lodging and examination procedure due to an increasing case load and the frequent use of false documents in visa applications. Several member states have reported a high rate of no-shows for visa appointments, possibly due to the unscrupulous behaviour of certain brokers.

Some member states not present or represented in Dhaka reported challenges linked to the fact that the Indian High Commission in Dhaka only offered reduced visa services to Bangladeshi citizens following the change of government in August 2024. This resulted in some Bangladeshi citizens not being able to travel to India to submit visa applications to member state embassies in New Delhi.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The harmonized list of supporting documents for visa applications in Bangladesh was adopted on 30 August 2017 and implementation started in September 2017. None of the member states has raised any difficulty with the implementation.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

Represented Schengen countries are mostly applying the cascade system as a general rule and recognize that exceptions can be made in specific cases.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Although no problems with different visa fees have been observed, member states attempt to harmonize the visa fee in line with Article 16(7) of the Visa code. However, the different national systems do not allow for full implementation of Article 16(7). Currently the BDT price for a Schengen visa vary slightly (+/- 5 EUR difference) depending on the member state where the application is lodged.

All representations except CH are using the services of VFS (ES uses BLS) and generally experience a good cooperation with the service providers.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Member states exchanged the following information during the reporting period:

- quarterly statistics and trends shared by member states via email;
- cases of possible fraud or practical cases or difficulties encountered;
- information provided to applicants about the minimum requirements for the obligatory travel insure, as well as how to deal with medical insurance providers which are not on the list of recommended insurance providers;
- respective positions on Bangladesh's accession to the Apostille Convention and challenges encountered in its application;

- the use of new technologies to examine visa applications and disseminate relevant information to potential applicants.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

Member states used LSC meetings to launch a joint communication campaign on the use of fraudulent documents in visa applications.

## **4. Challenges**

- Due to the high prevalence of fraudulent or false documents, including high quality counterfeits produced by organised criminal organisations, in Schengen and national visa applications, verification is increasingly time consuming and challenging.
- Visa and embassy staff in Dhaka experienced occasionally security and safety issues when interacting with applicants.
- Protests erupted outside the embassy of at least one member state due to public discontent about visa processing times amid growing politicisation of visa issues.

## **5. Other issues**

N/A



20 February 2026

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN BELARUS**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

16 EU Schengen Member States are present in Belarus: Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden. From non-EU Schengen MS Switzerland is present as well. Eleven Schengen Member States (MS) deliver visas (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia).

Due to expulsion of the LV Embassy from Belarus, only the Consulate in Vitebsk continues to work. Lithuania closed its Consulate in Hrodna due to drastic reduction of all staff and operates in Minsk with one expat capacity. Estonia, while still keeping the embassy open, operates with no expat staff in Minsk since the summer 2024. The Poland's Consulates in Minsk, Hrodna and Brest operate with significantly limited staff.

As representation is concerned, please note the following:

1. EE represented Finland<sup>3</sup> and Sweden until August 2024<sup>4</sup>;
2. France represents Iceland and Spain (only VIP and urgent);
3. Germany represents Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Slovenia;
4. Hungary represents Switzerland and Liechtenstein;
5. Italy represents Malta;
6. Latvia temporarily suspended all visa representation since March 2022;

---

<sup>3</sup> Since March 2025, BY citizens planning to travel to FI could only apply for Schengen visas at the FI Embassy in Moscow.

<sup>4</sup> SE temporary representation agreement with FR ended in September 2025. SE is currently awaiting new representational agreement. Visa issuance is currently suspended.

7. Slovakia represents Portugal.

8. France represented Sweden on a temporary base until September 30<sup>th</sup> 2025.

## **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

During the reporting period, three LSC meetings were held (5 February, 13 May and 30 September). The meetings were generally well attended by 12-14 MS.

As previously, the EU Delegation (EUDEL) is organising and chairing LSC meetings. EUDEL draws up the meetings' reports and disseminates the draft among LSC members for comments before their final adoption. EUDEL asks MS for input to the meetings' agenda. No online meetings were held in the reporting period, however, some MS covering from other capitals (Moscow and Warsaw) occasionally showed interest in this format.

MS Consulates outside Minsk are informed about the LSC meetings and related issues via e-mail (they receive meetings' agenda, reports, questions, etc.), and participate when possible.

## **3. State of play**

### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Member States reported no problems in implementation. The Visa Code is being implemented in a well-coordinated manner by the LSC states' consular offices located in Belarus, although the smooth implementation was somehow impacted by the Russian war on Ukraine and staffing limitations imposed by the authorities. Some EUMS were subject to expulsions of their diplomatic and consular staff and can consequently count on limited resources and capacities for issuing visas. Some other MS experience extreme challenges related to a high numbers of applicants, therefore, long waiting times (1.5 – 18 months) are in place.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The Commission Implementing Decision as regards the list of supporting documents to be submitted by visa applicants for short stay in Belarus (C(2020) 6149 final) started to be implemented on 21 September 2020. No problems were reported by EUMS in 2025, and there is no need at the moment to amend the existing list.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

The Group agreed that currently there was no need to adapt general rules locally in Belarus. Article 24 of the Visa Code and Article 5 of the Visa Facilitation Agreement cover most of categories. The implementation of the VFA by EUMS remains markedly diversified.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Entry into force of the EU-Belarus Visa Facilitation Agreement helped to ensure a harmonised approach, in particular in the area of visa fees. EUMS do not see any need for additional harmonisation exercises at the moment.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

The LSC and EUDEL regularly shared relevant information in accordance with art 48.3 of the Visa Code. EUMS sent statistics to EUDEL on a quarterly basis. The regular exchange of information within the LSC covered implementation of the Visa Information System, use of VIS Mail, cases of fraud and other relevant issues. EUDEL coordinates a dedicated Signal group for urgent exchange of information while MS remain active by sharing information in the chat.

After the war on Ukraine started, a number of MS (EE, LV, LT, PL and CZ) continued issuing Schengen visas upon specific conditions and only for citizens wishing to visit family members in the EU, as well as on humanitarian grounds, e.g., Belarusian citizens suffering from political repressions, serious illness or funeral of a close relative, or other exceptional cases. PL later resume the issuance of all types of visas. C type visas can be issued for humanitarian reasons by LT, as well as by the CZ, upon a special permission by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. LT has restrictions on visa issuance for citizens of BY and RU. Visa can be issued for relatives (spouses and children under age of 21) of EU citizens. Some EUMS like PL focused on issuing D visas. To satisfy a growing demand of visas and to recall the importance of people-to-people contacts by supporting mobility, some EUMS like IT and DE considerably augmented the visas issued for family visits, business, tourism and humanitarian cases if foreseen by the national legislation.

Some EUMS reported a constantly increased of the number of applicants and cases of visa shopping, as a consequence of other Embassies' reduction in visa issuing. Several MS discovered cases of time slots being sold. The medium refusal rate has slightly decreased, reaching approx. 3.6% of the total number of applications (3.7% in 2024).

#### 4. Challenges

1. The EU-Belarus Visa Facilitation Agreement (VFA) entered into force on 1 July 2020. Some EUMS started to apply it with a restrictive approach after the repressions of the regime after 2020 presidential elections and the war in Ukraine in 2022, despite the Council decision of 11 November 2021 on partially suspending the application of the EU-Belarus Visa Facilitation Agreement did not regard ordinary citizens.
2. The national limitations from some Capitals and the understaffing of some EUMS consular sections, especially of neighbouring MS with BY caused by deteriorating bilateral relations and BY requesting to decrease the number of diplomatic staff, significantly increased the burden on operating EUMS and severely limited access of Belarusian citizens to Schengen visas.
3. The unilateral visa free regime for short visits for LV, LT and PL citizens and extended by Minsk to all EUMS citizens as of 17 July 2024 continued to be in place. Starting from 20 March 2025, foreign citizens were able to enter BY using the E-visa. This option is now available also to the holders of ordinary passports of EUMS. Despite warnings by the authorities, people used quite actively this opportunity. For allegedly politically motivated cases the consular access is unpredictable and, in several cases, limited or non-existing (especially dual (EU/BY) citizenship holders are affected).

The report was approved by the Member States on 20 February 2026.



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE IN BOSNIA AND  
HERZEGOVINA**

5 May 2026

## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA 2025 REPORT**

### **1. Introduction**

There are 20 EU MS/SAC diplomatic missions present in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) [Austria (AT), Bulgaria (BG), Belgium (BE), Croatia (HR), Czech Republic (CZ), Denmark (DK), Germany (DE), Greece (EL), Spain (ES), France (FR), Ireland (IR), Italy (IT), Hungary (HU), Netherlands (NL), Poland (PL), Romania (RO), Slovenia (SI), Slovakia (SK), Sweden (SE), Switzerland (CH) and Norway (NO)]. The consular section of NL covers Luxembourg (LU) and Belgium (BE) in terms of visas, SE covers Denmark (DK) in terms of visas, while the consular section of HU covers Lithuania (LT) and Estonia (EE), AT covers Malta (MT), SE covers Denmark (DK) and Slovenia covers Switzerland (CH) and Portugal (PT).

Implementation of visa-free regime between EU and BiH further remained normal with no issues registered.

On visa-free regimes and further alignment of visa policy with the EU/Visa Acquis, BiH did not make any further progress.

Besides keeping seasonal visa-free regime with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, local authorities additionally granted the same seasonal visa-free regime to Oman, Bahrein and Kuwait.

EU actively advocated initiation of joining BiH to European Migration Network and adoption strategic framework of migration and asylum policy but BiH authorities failed in both the processes in the reporting period.

Efforts invested in negotiations with EU/EC on the Model Status Agreement resulted in full adoption and deployment of the FRONTEX Standing Corps officers to BiH. The final ratification by BiH is still pending but without negative effects on the Agreement's implementation.

The Working Arrangement is still pending with the EU for personal data protection assessment.

On returns and readmission, in 2025 number of both forced and assisted/voluntary return operations increased, whilst readmission operations to Pakistan further remained limited. EU further financed

most of the forced returns, whilst the assisted voluntary returns were further supported by IOM. Negotiations with other countries of origin on readmission agreements or other arrangements, notably with Bangladesh, Egypt and Morocco revealed limited tangible results.

On readmission with neighbouring countries, ‘shortened’ readmission procedures from HR increased in 2025, whilst results of the ‘shortened’ procedures with SER and MNE remained limited.

## **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

In 2025 the EU Office in BiH (EU Special Representative’s Office and EU Delegation) hosted two well attended LSC meetings, namely on 22 April and 26 November 2025. Reasons for this were political stalemate/crisis and lack of any significant/concrete results in integrated border management, migration or asylum policies to be reported or discussed. The EU House continued to cooperate with the EUMS/SAC on different subjects using regular information channels, including in cooperation with EU institutions in MHQ/Brussels as well.

Meeting reports were distributed to EUMS/SAC and appropriate institutions in MHQ/Brussels. No ad-hoc meetings were organized in 2025.

It is important to say that EUMS/SAC were provided opportunities to proactively discuss open issues in the meetings on wide variety of subjects, especially security and political situation that might have effects on daily operations of the missions.

In the reporting period we could have recognized some tangible but limited results that local authorities made with an intensive facilitation of the EU Office in BiH in visa, integrated border management and migration management policies. Details are provided in the text below.

## **3. State of play**

### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

EUMS/SAC did not report any issues regarding the application of the EU/Visa Acquis/Code, including its changes of Regulation (EU) 2019/1155 dated 20 June 2019.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

EUMS/SAC did not report any issues related to harmonized list of supporting documents.

There was no communication with the Visa Committee in the reporting period.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

EUMS/SAC did not report any problems on application of Article 24 in the reporting period.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Information received from EUMS/SAC suggest that all practices were harmonized to the highest possible extent following the Visa Code provisions, including its annexes.

Local authorities did not suspend limited (30-days) visa-free regime with Russia in framework of the EU sanctions.

Temporary humanitarian residence for Ukrainian citizens is still in force. Number of asylum applications filed remains rather low compared to the total number of incoming and outgoing Ukrainian citizens.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

In 2025 visa statistics were not received in a consistent manner despite of multiple reiterations.

Compared to the previous reporting period, the most important changes the EUMS/SAC were informed on were explained as in the following text:

#### **Visa policy in BiH**

In the reporting period, the EUMS/SAC were informed on finalized deployment of EU-donated equipment and introduction of biometric visa applications as of 1 October 2025. Local authorities also finalized selection process for engagement of external service provider, as per EU/Visa Acquis. Abuse of visa-free regime primarily by citizens of Turkey, China and Russia continued with an increasing trend.

In order to fully harmonize visa-free policy with the EU/Visa Acquis, BiH still has to revoke visa-free regimes with Azerbaijan, Bahrein [seasonal], China, Kuwait, Oman [seasonal], Russia, Saudi Arabia [seasonal], Turkey, Qatar and Vanuatu.

#### **DG HOME/DDG Onidi mission**

EUMS/SAC were informed on DG HOME's security missions to BiH for following implementation of the EU Action Plan on Migration for minimizing negative consequences of illegal migration.

Focus of the missions was primarily set on abuse of visa-free regimes of BiH with other high migratory-risk third countries and more efficient profiling methods required, especially at the Sarajevo International Airport.

EUMS/SAC were also informed on messages passed on methods of more efficient fight against human smuggling and human trafficking, but other forms of cross-border major and organized crime forms.

### **Integrated Border Management (IBM) policy**

The EUMS/SAC were informed on positive effects of signing the Status Agreement and consequent deployment of FRONTEX Standing Corps in BiH, notably in border surveillance and border checks operations.

Participants were also informed on providing the Schengen Action Plan by the EU to BiH authorities with an obligation to establish the National Schengen Governance Framework.

Participants were also informed on adoption of the Integrated Border Management Strategy is and related improvements once fully implemented.

On establishing the Passenger Data Exchange (API/PNR) systems, the EUMS/SAC were informed on a limited progress on the API system and on no progress on the PNR system.

### **Migration policy**

EUMS/SAC were informed on status of the Transition Plan and Book of Rules on Temporary Reception Centres that local authorities failed to adopt, including potential correlation with the EU Pact on migration. EUMS/SAC were informed on activities of the Task Force for Fighting Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration and general security situation in BiH. EUMS/SAC were regularly updated on migratory trends, statistics, human smuggling, human trafficking and other related crimes related to migratory movements through the BiH territory. Local authorities continued talks with multiple countries of origin of migrants on readmission agreements, e.g. Bangladesh, Morocco and Egypt but without significant tangible results. In 2025, BiH registered decrease of migrants compared to 2024 for changes in movements on the WB Route, including continued border measures and operations on the SER/HU borders. On EU level, there were no significant changes after full adoption of the EU Pact on Migration as transposition period was/is two years, meaning by June 2026.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

The EU Office in BiH initiated an Awareness Raising/Training Sessions on forged documents with FRONTEX but never received any feedback on it. No other initiatives were taken in 2025.

#### 4. Challenges

In 2025 as of the last Annual Report, the EU Office in BiH focused its facilitation and advisory expertise on achieving the following [Key] Priorities:

1. Signing of the Model Status Agreement between EU and BiH - *achieved*,
2. Supporting introduction of biometric visas in BiH Diplomatic and Consular Offices - *achieved*,
3. Adoption of the new Law on Border Crossing Control - *achieved*,
4. Full implementation of the Risk Analysis Training Cycle process and finalization of the drafting the Instruction on Risk Analysis fully harmonized with CIRAM 2.0 methodology - *achieved*,
5. Endorsing the Roadmap for cooperation with EU Asylum Agency - *achieved*,
6. Improving capacities of the Witness Protection Unit for different protection methods - *achieved*,  
and

In 2026, besides the opening chapter negotiations as the ultimate objective, the EU Office will focus on the following objectives:

1. Establishing the Advanced Passenger Information [API] system in BiH,
2. Amending the BiH Criminal Code with provisions on human trafficking/smuggling crimes,
3. Further supporting improvement of the Joint Risk Analysis Centre's business process,
4. Negotiations on the new Working Arrangement between BiH Border Police and FRONTEX,
5. Further alignment of the BiH visa policy with the 'White Schengen List' for termination of visa-free regimes, notably 'seasonal' ones with Bahrain, Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,
6. Remain actively engaged in all aspects of migratory and asylum movements and trends in BiH, including fight against illegal migration.
7. Further support implementation of migration and asylum management policies in BiH,

#### 5. Other issues

The issue of protests of professional truck drivers and the 90/180 Schengen zone stay rule was raised for a limited period of time, notably prior introduction of the Entry/Exit System and the coming ETIAS. As some of EUMS (primarily HR) announced some legal solutions, nevertheless the demand from the affected stakeholders for a sustainable long-term solution remains.

No other issues of a specific importance raised by the EUMS/SAC.

27/4/2026



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN BRAZIL**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

Twenty-five Schengen Member States are present in Brazil (AT, BE, BG, HR, CZ, DK, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE, CH) and twenty-four have a representation in the capital, Brasilia (LT has a Consulate in São Paulo). Estonia, Latvia, Iceland and Liechtenstein do not have embassies/consulates in Brazil.

Sixteen Schengen Member States (AT, BE, CH, CZ, DE, DK, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, LT, NL, PT) have official Consulates in **São Paulo**.

Ten Schengen Member States (BE, CH, DE, ES, FR, IT, NL, NO, PT, RO) have official Consulates in **Rio de Janeiro**.

Three Schengen Member States (DE, FR, IT, PT) have official consulates in the city of **Recife**; 3 Schengen Member States (DE, ES, IT, PT) have official consulates in **Porto Alegre**; 2 Schengen Member States (IT, PL and PT), have official consulates in the city of **Curitiba**; 2 Schengen Member States (IT and PT) have official consulates in **Belo Horizonte**; 2 Schengen Member States (ES and PT) have official consulates in the city of **Salvador**. PT also has an official consulate in **Belem** and **Fortaleza**.

Hungary and Liechtenstein are represented for Schengen visas by Switzerland, and Luxemburg is represented by Belgium. Schengen visa applications for Norway and Sweden are centralised at the Norwegian Consulate General in New York, USA.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

In the absence of the identification of necessary topics for discussion, no Schengen coordination meetings were organised. Schengen members present in Brasilia (CH, NO) participated in joint EU-Schengen Consular Coordination Meetings (2 meetings organized in 2025).

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Thanks to the EU-Brazil Schengen visa waiver agreement, there are no Schengen visa-related specific problems and there is little perceived need to discuss visa code related questions amongst Schengen Member States. The Visa Information System (VIS) is implemented. The requirement for collecting biometric details meant that in some cases visa applicants needed to travel farther (considering Brazil's size), in order to satisfy this requirement.

Member States apply different exchange rates and update them with different regularity, mostly according to instructions from their capitals, which makes it difficult to have one uniform visa fee in the local currency. However, the differences in fees are not significant and they did not lead to 'visa shopping'.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The European Commission adopted the decision on harmonised list of supporting documents for Brazil in September 2016. So far, Member States in Brazil have not expressed the need to amend the existing list.

#### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

Some Member States encourage the delivery of multiple-entry visas under Article 24(2) of the visa Code (MEV cascades). There is for the time being no perceived need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code.

#### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Most visas are issued in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, followed by Brasilia. As mentioned above, thanks to the EU-Brazil Schengen visa waiver agreement, Schengen visa-related problems do not constitute a major issue in the local consular work. So far, no harmonisation of practices has taken place, nor is there appetite to do so.

#### **3.5 Exchange of information**

The exchange of information within the LSC can be swiftly activated when needed, through hybrid meetings, as well as WhatsApp groups. Member States use VIS Mail.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

Not applicable

### **4. Challenges**

No particular challenges regarding the Schengen cooperation were observed. Schengen Member States are encouraged and invited to propose topics for the agendas of LSC.

### **5. Other issues**

Not applicable.



Ouagadougou, le 27/02/2026

**COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET  
LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC) [OUAGADOUGOU, BURKINA FASO]**  
**RAPPORT 2025**

**1. Introduction**

Au Burkina Faso, trois Etats membres de l'espace Schengen délivrent des visa (BE, DE, FR), avec la Belgique représentant également quatre autres Etats membres à travers des accords de représentation en matière de visa Schengen (FI, HU, LU, NL).

La coopération locale Schengen (LSC) s'est tenue régulièrement en 2025 entre les consulats présents, basée sur des efforts précédents au niveau de l'harmonisation de gestion des demandes et des pièces justificatives. À la suite de la demande des Etats membres, ainsi qu'au risque de *visa shopping* à la hausse, des réunions LSC sont organisés depuis janvier 2025.

Par suite des attaques violentes contre l'ambassade et le consulat de France en novembre 2022, la France avait annoncé une suspension des accords de représentation. Alors que la délivrance des visa a été reprise, les services consulaires français reçoivent les demandes uniquement par dérogation et exceptionnellement, même si en grand nombre (augmentation de 50% en 2025).

**2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2025**

Quatre réunions LSC ont été organisées en 2025, couplées avec les réunions de coordination consulaire. La présidence est assurée par la DUE. Il y a habituellement une réunion par trimestre. La participation est nombreuse, et certains EM qui gèrent le Burkina depuis d'autres pays participent par visioconférence (ES, PL, RO). La DUE établit les rapports. La coordination LSC n'est pas assurée en dehors de la capitale, car il n'y a pas de consulats en province et le personnel diplomatique est limité dans ses mouvements en dehors de la capitale par la situation sécuritaire.

### **3. État des lieux**

#### **3.1 Application du Code des Visas**

Une évaluation de l'état de préparation des EM et de la DUE en vue d'assurer les tâches à accomplir dans le cadre de la coopération consulaire au titre de Schengen prévues par le Code des Visas sera entreprise durant le premier semestre de 2026.

BE, FR travaillent avec un prestataire de service externe, alors que DE ne le fait pas. Les délais d'attente pour les rendez-vous vont de trois à six mois. Le « *visa-shopping* » est constaté par BE, DE, suite aux limitations en cours au Consulat général de France.

DE : Le « *visa shopping* » a diminué grâce au rejet systématique de ce type de demandes. La destination du voyage doit être sans aucun doute l'Allemagne. Même en cas de nouvelles demandes, les anciens tampons d'entrée sur le passeport sont vérifiés, de même que des factures provenant d'Allemagne, etc.

Le blocage des rendez-vous dans le système allemand de prise de rendez-vous est notamment le problème le plus important et le plus persistant. Les adresses e-mail peuvent être utilisées de manière illimitée, ce qui aggrave encore la situation en matière de rendez-vous.

#### **3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs**

Les EM présents considèrent que l'harmonisation des pratiques est déjà réalisée.

#### **3.3 Estimation du besoin d'adapter les règles générales relatives à la délivrance des visas à entrées multiples aux demandeurs en vertu de l'Article 24(2) du Code des Visas (« cascades MEV »)**

La situation prévalant au Burkina Faso ne permet pas d'envisager pour FR à ce stade une reprise de la « cascade » dans la mesure où les prises de rendez-vous pour dépôt de demande de visas demeurent dérogatoires.

Les EM estiment que la liste des documents justificatifs est harmonisée.

#### **3.4 Harmonisation des procédures**

Il n'y a pas de problèmes particuliers au niveau de l'harmonisation des procédures et des documents.

### **3.4 Echange d'informations**

L'échange d'informations fonctionne extrêmement bien. Grâce à ce partage, tout le monde est toujours au courant des nouveaux types de faux documents/revente des rendez-vous, etc. et peut réagir de manière concertée.

Les statistiques trimestrielles sont partagées dans les réunions LSC, ainsi que les cas de fraude et leur typologie.

Le Visa Information System est utilisé, par contre le VISMail est jugé d'utilisation difficile. Une coopération existe avec la plupart des établissements bancaires dans le cadre de la traque de faux relevés bancaires.

FR et BE exercent des contrôles du prestataire de service commun.

Pour l'assurance médicale de voyage, les EM partagent la liste des compagnies d'assurance qui offrent une assurance conforme.

### **3.5 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC**

Visites réciproques dans les services consulaires afin de pouvoir observer les procédures en direct et transmettre les meilleures pratiques ou s'en inspirer.

## **4. Défis**

À la suite de la réduction des services consulaires de la France, les consulats des deux autres Etats membres qui continuent à délivrer des visa (BE, DE) ont constaté durant l'année 2025 une augmentation significative des demandes de visa touristiques et pour visite en famille. Il y a également une augmentation de la documentation frauduleuse.

Vu le risque accru de « visa shopping » et l'augmentation du nombre des demandes auprès des autres consulats, les réunions de coordination LSC ont été organisées trimestriellement en 2025.

## **5. Divers**



**COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET  
LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC) AU BURUNDI**

**RAPPORT 2025**

**1. Introduction**

L'Ambassade de Belgique à Bujumbura représente tous les États Membres résidents (FR, NL, DE) ainsi que 15 États Membres non-résidents (LU, AU, CZ, SK, SI, GR, IT, ES, PT, SV, FI, LT, LV, EE, MT) en ce qui concerne la délivrance des visas Schengen. La Suisse, présente à Bujumbura, est également représentée par l'Ambassade de Belgique.

**2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2025**

En 2024, 5 réunions LSC ont eu lieu. La participation des États Membres est généralement élevée : la majorité des États Membres prennent part aux réunions de façon régulière. La Délégation de l'UE préside les réunions et rédige les rapports, qui sont ensuite partagés avec les États Membres.

**3. État des lieux**

**3.1 Application du Code des Visas**

*Rien à signaler*

**3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs.**

Bien qu'il ne soit pas nécessaire de revoir la liste complète des documents de base, des documents supplémentaires sont souvent demandés dans le cadre de dossiers spécifiques, en raison du risque élevé de migration au Burundi.

**3.3 Estimation du besoin d'adapter les règles générales relatives à la délivrance des visas à entrées multiples aux demandeurs en vertu de l'Article 24(2) du Code des Visas (« cascades MEV »)**

À partir de leur troisième demande de visa, les demandeurs ont la possibilité d'obtenir un visa à entrées multiples selon la séquence suivante : 6 mois – 1 an – 2 ans, etc.

Les visas à entrée multiple de 6 mois à partir d'une troisième demande de visa ont été introduits depuis novembre 2024 afin d'alléger la pression sur le service des visas après une augmentation considérable du nombre de demandes de visa. Cette décision a été communiquée à la Délégation.

La Belgique est plutôt réticente à délivrer des visas à entrée multiple d'une durée supérieure à trois ans en tenant compte de la situation politique et sécuritaire qui reste volatile. La prudence est certainement de mise vis-à-vis des acteurs politiques, tout comme des familles avec enfants. Les acteurs commerciaux présents dans le pays depuis des décennies et qui sont restés (ou sont revenus) malgré les crises successives, les membres du clergé qui se rendent depuis longtemps dans l'espace Schengen à des fins religieuses sont plutôt considérés comme respectant durablement les conditions d'octroi des visas. Outre les conditions prescrites, le profil du demandeur concerné est donc pris en compte.

Bien qu'il ne soit pas nécessaire de modifier les règles générales, les règles existantes doivent être appliquées avec souplesse compte tenu du contexte spécifique.

### **3.4 Harmonisation des procédures**

Rien à signaler

### **3.5 Echange d'informations**

En 2025, BE a délivré 5260 visas Schengen, par rapport à 3730 en 2024. La tendance à la hausse déjà observable en 2024 s'est donc poursuivie en 2025. On suppose que la décision des États-Unis de suspendre (temporairement ?) les visas pour le Burundi a contribué à cette augmentation.

Vue que BE est le seul pays qui délivre des visas Schengen au Burundi, l'échange d'informations se fait généralement de manière informelle. Les autres États membres sont informés des grandes tendances dans le pays. Pour le reste, les États membres sont systématiquement associés aux dossiers spécifiques pour lesquels ils interviennent.

Conformément à l'accord de représentation entre nos deux pays, les échanges avec la France sont plus fréquents. Ces échanges portent sur les demandes d'asile dans nos deux pays, y compris les tendances en matière de risque migratoire, les échanges sur les documents frauduleux, la coordination en matière de visas médicaux et les échanges ad hoc lorsque certains cas particuliers sont signalés.

La Belgique demande également l'avis des autres États membres sur une base ad hoc lorsqu'il s'agit de demandes de visa pour raisons médicales.

### **3.5 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC**

Rien à signaler

#### **4. Défis**

Rien à signaler

#### **5. Divers**

Rien à signaler



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN CABO VERDE**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

Cabo Verde is a small archipelagic upper middle-income country with well-functioning democratic institutions and overall good governance. In 2007, a Special Partnership between Cabo Verde and the EU was launched, and in parallel a Mobility Partnership was agreed (2008). A Visa Facilitation Agreement (VFA) and a Readmission Agreement entered into force on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014. Following an evaluation in 2018 and extended negotiations, an amendment to the Visa Facilitation Agreement, entered into force on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022.

There are four resident Member State Embassies in Cabo Verde: Spain, France, Luxembourg and Portugal. Many EU MS have ambassadors in Dakar and Lisbon accredited to Cabo Verde and there is a dense network (17) of EU honorary consulates in the different islands of the country. Portugal runs the Common Visa Centre (CCV) in Praia, which receives Schengen visa requests for 19 Schengen countries. Portugal is the destination of most (over 90%) of the Schengen visa applications received in the country, Portugal's consular operation is thus divided in two: the Common Visa Centre (CCV) and the Consular Section. The former processes applications for 19 Schengen countries and the later does so for national residency and temporary stay visas, including under the CPLP countries regime. This regime has no impact on Schengen visas – including for Portugal.

Spain does not participate in the CCV and has its own consular section in Praia. Both Spain (through honorary consuls) and Portugal offer the possibility to present applications in other islands, which are eventually processed in Praia. There is good cooperation between Portugal (CCV) and Spain in cases where further information on refusals/applicants is needed, as well as on any other question of common interest.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

During the reporting period, two regular LSC meetings (back-to back with Local Consular Coordination meetings) were held in April and November 2025. They were chaired by EU DEL and attended by all four resident MS.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Both, the CCV and the Spanish Consular Section have quickly integrated the new rules introduced by the amended Visa Facilitation Agreement, notably as regards, reduction of fees, simplification of required documents and facilitation of multiple-entries visas.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

Article 4 of the amended Visa Facilitation Agreement EU Cabo Verde contains different provisions that simplify and facilitate issuing of multiple-entry visas. Since its entry into force on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 the number and rapidity of concession of multiple-entry visas have sensibly increased. The proportion of these visas was already high (about 50% of Schengen Visas issued) and it is expected to further increase.

Recently, Cabo Verde authorities have issued new passports valid for 10 years. But, for the time being, most of them remain with a maximum validity of five years, which makes it difficult to issue 4- and 5-year multiple-entry visas.

#### **3.3 Harmonisation of practices**

Given the fact that the Common Visa Centre receives and processes requests for Schengen visas for 19 Schengen countries, there is a large degree of harmonisation of practices in place. This applies also to the Spanish Consular Section.

#### **3.4 Exchange of information**

During LSC meetings, a regular exchange of information takes place, including on the following issues:

- ongoing trends on visa requests and statistics
- overall trends in visa applications, seasonal variations
- cooperation with local authorities and companies (e.g. banks, employers, transport companies)
- cases of fraud, in particular false documents and "mariages blancs" and an exchange of best practices on how to discover and minimize such frauds
- issues related to visa-shopping, and the presence of external operators that seem to monopolize the on-line reservation of slots for appointments to the CCV

## 4. Challenges

The CCV experienced a difficult period in previous years in coping with an ever-increasing number of visa applications. Challenges persist, particularly regarding online visa appointment bookings, as intermediaries reserved most slots and negotiated with applicants, fuelling unfounded accusations that the CCV was selling appointments. To tackle this issue, CCV decided to accept requests of appointments made by email, from family members of EU citizens, frequent travellers, companies, participants to international events with an invitation letter, applicants who complain about not being able to schedule an appointment online and who send proof of this and other categories that can be found on the website. By the end of 2025, 60% of appointments were not requested through the e-visa platform.

Elsewhere, as a result of an intensive and continuous information campaign on its website and social media, the CCV has recorded fewer applications (compare to the previous years) falling outside the scope of the Schengen Agreement, as well as fewer submissions containing insufficient or fraudulent supporting documents. In 2025, the CCV received a total of 26,209 Schengen visa applications of which 20,680 were issued (78.9%) and 4,100 were refused (15.6%).

For its part, the **ES Consular Section** is also facing challenges since a significant number of requests are suspected to fall under the competence of the CCV. Indeed, applicants often turn to the ES Consulate when they encounter difficulties booking appointments via the CCV or due to misinformation. The ES Consular Section has also noted cases of applicants who had previously received a visa refusal from the CCV and subsequently attempted to lodge a new application with the Spanish authorities. Nevertheless, from 41% in 2024, the refusal rate decreased to 23% in 2025. During the previous year, ES Consulate received a total of 1399 Schengen visa requests of which 993 approved and 335 were refused.

**LU embassy** in Cabo Verde continues to provide support to CCV in the analysis of Schengen Visa requests involving LU (381 requests received in 2025). The LU Embassy in Portugal processes also long-term national visa requests although applicants can present their application at the embassy in Cabo Verde.

**FR embassy** still offers the possibility to lodge long-term national in Praia but receive a limited number of requests (35-40 per month).

Overall, the rules of the Visa Code and the Visa Facilitation Agreement are applied correctly, but many Cabo Verdean applicants feel treated unfairly when their requests are refused. Further information campaigns, agreed with local authorities, would be positive to clarify the existing rules and procedures and to warn over excessive expectations.

Although national authorities recognise the positive effects of the entry into force of the Amended Visa Facilitation Agreement, Cabo Verde's ambition to accede in the future to a visa-waiver (visa-free) regime remains a recurrent topic in all formal political dialogues within the framework of the EU–Cabo Verde Special Partnership.



**COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET  
LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC) CAMEROUN**

**RAPPORT 2025**

**1. Introduction**

Six Etats Schengen sont représentés au Cameroun (Allemagne, Belgique, Espagne, France, Italie, Suisse). Tous ces Etats ont une section visas au sein de leur Ambassade ou Consulat à Yaoundé, et la France dispose en outre d'une section visas au sein de son Consulat général à Douala. Certains pays Schengen ont des accords pour en représenter d'autres (la Belgique avec l'Autriche, le Luxembourg et les Pays-Bas ; la France avec : à Yaoundé et Douala, le Danemark et la République Tchèque, seulement à Yaoundé, la Grèce, la Lettonie, la Lituanie et Malte, et seulement à Douala la Slovénie ; l'Espagne avec le Portugal et la Slovénie; l'Allemagne avec l'Estonie et la Hongrie).

La Belgique et la France ont recours à un prestataire de services externe, en l'occurrence la société TLS Contact pour la Belgique depuis 2021 et pour la France depuis 2023, pour le traitement des visas Schengen. En ce qui concerne la France, TLS est présente à Yaoundé, Douala et reçoit les dossiers de demande de visas à Garoua (ils sont ensuite acheminés à Yaoundé). L'Italie a également externalisé la réception des demandes de visa, qu'elle confie à BLS International, remplaçant ainsi VFS Global. L'Espagne a fait appel à l'opérateur BLS jusqu'au COVID. Depuis les visas sont directement traités par le consulat.

La question de la migration et notamment de la réadmission a été abordée lors du premier dialogue de partenariat dans le cadre de l'Accord de Samoa, un suivi est prévu en 2026.

**2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2025**

Deux réunions de coordination Schengen ont été organisées à la Délégation de l'Union européenne au Cameroun en 2025, au niveau des Chefs de section consulaire, consuls, ou agents en charge des visas, en février et en juin 2025.

**3. État des lieux**

**3.1 Application du Code des Visas**

Les délais d'attente sont très variables selon les Etats membres, selon qu'ils disposent d'un opérateur de réception des demandes de visas ou non.

Ils varient de plusieurs mois (Allemagne), entre 10 jours en début d'année à 6-8 semaines lorsque le nombre de demandes est plus fort (Suisse) à 24h (Belgique). Les demandes prioritaires peuvent être traitées en 1 à deux semaines pour l'Espagne.

Les Etats membres constatent en effet du « visa shopping » : des demandeurs font une demande de visa à un Etat membre pour se rendre en réalité dans un autre pays. Cela peut s'expliquer par la longueur des délais d'attente ou la perception que le taux de refus serait moins élevé chez certains Etats membres, ou bien le nombre de pièces à produire.

### **3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs.**

Il n'y a pas d'harmonisation pour le moment, même si les documents demandés sont assez similaires d'un consulat à l'autre. Certains Etats Schengen sont favorables à l'harmonisation, notamment la Belgique.

### **3.3 Estimation du besoin d'adapter les règles générales relatives à la délivrance des visas à entrées multiples aux demandeurs en vertu de l'Article 24(2) du Code des Visas (« cascades MEV »)**

Les Etats Schengen appliquent la cascade MEV, avec davantage de flexibilité pour la plupart d'entre eux. Ainsi le visa à entrées multiples est souvent donné à partir de deux visas.

### **3.4 Harmonisation des procédures**

Les Etats encouragent à l'harmonisation et le partage d'informations telles que les listes de notaires, d'avocats, de banques.

### **3.5 Echange d'informations**

L'échange d'information LSC se déroule principalement pendant les rencontres semestrielles des chefs de section consulaires/visas à la Délégation ou sur des cas particuliers directement entre Etats. Elles permettent des échanges approfondis concernant les préoccupations dans le cadre de la délivrance des visas, ainsi que des comparaisons de leurs données respectives.

- *statistiques trimestrielles* : La précision et la fréquence du partage des statistiques varie d'un Etat Schengen à un autre.
- *cas de fraude* : Il s'agit d'une problématique constante et le sujet principal des échanges. La plupart des types de fraudes est bien connue : faux documents d'état civil ou ajout a posteriori sur les registres d'état civil, jugements supplétifs douteux, faux extraits bancaires, faux diplômes, faux certificats médicaux, documents issus d'administrations ou d'établissements privés ou hospitaliers à l'insu de la personne investie du pouvoir de signature, fausse assurance voyage, fausse lettre d'invitation, etc... Une nouvelle fraude a été découverte : l'usurpation d'identité de hautes personnalités qui souhaitent faciliter la délivrance d'un visa pour un tiers.

Certains demandeurs sont également victimes d'arnaqueurs, qui leur proposent leur aide contre rémunération pour constituer leur dossier.

- *assurance médicale de voyage* : Plusieurs compagnies proposent des prises en charges adéquates à des prix raisonnables. Des fraudes et des arnaques sont constatées.
- *coopération avec les autorités locales et les compagnies locales (par exemple : banques, employeurs, compagnies de transport)* : Peu satisfaisante à satisfaisante pour les organismes privés (banques, compagnies aériennes, ...). Les organismes sollicités répondent habituellement rapidement et efficacement aux demandes d'authentification de documents ou de personnes mais parfois jamais, ou demandent à se faire payer. Elle est également délicate avec les organismes publics. Il semble que la vérification des diplômes soit à présent payante, ce qui pose des problèmes, notamment pour les universités en Europe. Les autorités tardent à répondre aux sollicitations. Les vérifications d'acte d'état civil peuvent ainsi nécessiter plusieurs mois voire rester sans réponse, faute d'outils de communication adéquats ou d'implication dans les fraudes : adresses électroniques fiables, numéros de téléphone etc. Certains Etats Schengen, comme la Belgique ont un agent qui procède à la vérification des documents.
- *coopération avec les prestataires de service et contrôle* : Partage d'informations (carnets d'adresses, e-mail, ...) à développer.
- *utilisation du VISMail et du Visa Information System* : Les Etats Schengen utilisent en effet VISMail, ainsi que les échanges par emails.

### **3.5 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC**

Un groupe SIGNAL a été créé.

## **4. Défis**

La fraude documentaire est le défi principal.

## **5. Divers**



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN CANADA  
2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

The 27 EU Member States (MS) are now represented in Ottawa. Luxembourg opened its embassy and Malta its High-Commission in Ottawa in 2024. Switzerland, Iceland and Norway also have diplomatic missions in Canada.

Many MS have an established network of Consulates in other large Canadian cities, with a bulk of their consular and Schengen visa work conducted in the large metropolitan areas of Toronto and Montreal, as well as in Vancouver. Some MS are present as well in Quebec, Calgary, Moncton and/or Edmonton. Honorary Consuls are present throughout many Canadian cities.

Several MS have engaged with private companies to handle the receipt of visa applications, including recording biometric. Several Schengen visa hubs have been established in major cities across Canada at this point.

In an effort to centralise visa processing regionally, some MS have also reorganised internally and now conduct the processing of visas at their missions in the US, while the physical aspects of this process (sticker print, shipping, etc.) remains at the diplomatic missions in Canada.

**2. Meetings held in 2025**

LCC and LSC meetings are organized jointly, one after another, in a hybrid format. For the first semester 2025, 3 LCC and LSC meetings took place in Ottawa in February, May and June . In February, we had a dedicated exchange with Global Affairs Canada on the Apostille convention and best practices. In May, Immigration Refugees Citizen Canada (IRCC) provided a comprehensive briefing on the new electronic Travel Authorization. In June, together with the Government Operation Center and Global Affairs Canada we held the first table exercise on consular and crisis preparedness in Canada.

For the second semester 2025, we organized 2 meetings involving the LSC and LCC group in October and November. Given the subject and the high level of the guests, these meetings were organized at the levels of HoMs (October – on consular and crisis preparedness with the executive director of Canada FIFA World Cup 2026) and DHoMs (November – on border management, EES/ETIAS with the deputy executive director of Frontex).

The Group regularly exchanges information by email. Except for the EU and Schengen states, no other countries participated to the meetings of the Group.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

The *unification* of work under the Visa Code is deemed advanced. The Handbook for the processing of visa applications and the modification of issued visas (Visa Code Handbook I)<sup>5</sup> are deemed useful by EU MS.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

An update of the Commission's implementing decision and its annex establishing the new harmonised list of supporting documents for Canada was adopted on 11 September 2024. There is no need for further update at that moment.

#### **3.3 Adaptation of the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

As a reminder, our discussions in 2024 showed that there was no consensus on the process as regards a possible simplification of the current MEV cascade. In that context, no further discussion took place in 2025. We could still put the question at the agenda would a majority of MS be willing to.

#### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

The LCC discussed the continuous concern as regards the increase of visa request/shopping.

#### **3.5 Exchange of information**

The Group agreed not to compile statistics for 2025. Yet, no cases of fraud were reported to the EU DEL or brought to a meeting. Exchanges took place during the LSC meetings.

#### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

Discussions took place on the EES/ETIAS system as this is a topic with a high impact for Canada given the number of travellers between Canada and the Schengen space, but also the number of

---

<sup>5</sup> [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/1d79f44d-49ba-4847-951e-129f924b1051\\_en?filename=Commission%20Implementing%20Decision%20C\(2024\)%204319-annex\\_en.PDF](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/1d79f44d-49ba-4847-951e-129f924b1051_en?filename=Commission%20Implementing%20Decision%20C(2024)%204319-annex_en.PDF)

binational. EUDEL made several briefings on the topic and stand ready to organize some ad-hoc meetings when the system would enter in force.

The Group also worked on the entry into force of the EU Emergency Travel Document, with appropriate exchanges with Canadian authorities (IRCC and the Canadian Border Agency Services).

On Apostille, there was some positive feedback on the overall process, in particular on the significant reduction in the time taken to process an application for an apostille. However, some MS still inform that some issues persist (long delay notably at peak summer season and sometimes document are lost). The meeting we had in February with Global Affairs Canada enabled to clarify the situation and discussed best practices. We will continue to closely follow up on this topic at the LCC in close contact with GAC.

On crisis preparedness. The Joint EU Consular Crisis Preparedness Framework was formally adopted by HoMs on January 2025. EUDEL was proactive in the proposal and facilitation of the negotiation of the Administrative Arrangement between the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development of Canada and the European Union External Action Service concerning International Cooperation in Emergency Planning and Crisis Response. This helps enhance the coordination with Canadian authorities, notably in the context of the crisis in the Middle East.

#### **4. Challenges**

Many MS informed that they continue to face a high number of demands, while their staff remains at the same level as in the last years. There was a consensus to say that this trend of such high volume visa demands will continue in the future. MS agreed that at least a seasonal manpower support would be expected from their HQs.

The implementation of EES/ETIAS is an important source of concerns for all the EU/MS, notably given with the uncertainty of the starting date. All the EU MS welcomed the EUDEL's briefings on the subject to answer some practical questions. Given the importance of Canadians that will be impacted, it will be one of the main subjects to be followed for 2026.

-----ENDS-----

*This report has been approved by the Local Schengen Cooperation Group on 17 February 2026.*



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN BEIJING (PRC)**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

26 EU Member States (all but Lithuania), together with Switzerland, Iceland and Norway, are present in China and/or represented in Beijing for the purposes of Schengen visa cooperation. EU Member State Consulates General are also present outside Beijing, notably in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Chengdu, Chongqing, Shenyang, Macao and Wuhan.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

In 2025, six Local Schengen Cooperation meetings were held in Beijing, on 13 February, 8 April, 10 June, 28 August, 23 October and 11 December. The meetings were held jointly with the Local Consular Cooperation format where appropriate, while keeping Schengen-related agenda items clearly identified.

During the first semester of 2025, meetings were co-chaired by the Polish Presidency and the EU Delegation. During the second semester, meetings were co-chaired by the Danish Presidency and the EU Delegation. Attendance was consistently good, with around 20 or more Member States and associated Schengen States represented at each meeting.

Reports were drawn up by the EU Delegation and/or the Presidency, and circulated to Member States locally via ZEUS. Coordination with Local Schengen Cooperation outside the capital is primarily ensured by Member States through their respective Consulates General. Relevant issues raised in Beijing, in particular those concerning Visa Application Centres (VACs), external service providers, statistics and harmonisation of practices, were also relevant for posts operating outside Beijing.

**3. State of play**

**3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

In 2025, Local Schengen Cooperation in China focused on the continued implementation of the Visa Code in a context of stable and gradually increasing demand for Schengen visas from Chinese applicants. Following the post-COVID recovery phase and the consolidation of visa operations in 2024, Member States continued to work on harmonising practices, strengthening information

exchange, monitoring external service providers and preparing for expected increases in visa applications in 2026.

Most Member States continue to rely on external service providers for the intake of visa applications. VFS Global remains the main provider for most Member States, while some Member States use other providers such as TLS or BLS. Discussions in 2025 focused in particular on the performance of external service providers, the availability and management of appointments, the offering of optional value-added services, and the need for continued monitoring of VAC operations.

Member States reported concerns regarding practices by some service providers, notably attempts to encourage applicants to use premium or value-added services, including premium lounges or additional paid appointment options. Some Member States reported that they had discontinued or restricted the use of premium services in response to such concerns. Other Member States using different providers did not report similar systemic issues.

Visa shopping and the use of intermediaries remained a recurring concern. Member States continued to exchange information on applicants relying on agencies or intermediaries other than the officially designated VACs, as well as on possible fraudulent documentation. The need to provide clear information to applicants and to discourage reliance on unauthorised intermediaries remained a common priority.

The group also discussed specific issues linked to Public Affairs Passports and service passports, including divergent practices among Member States concerning the intake of applications and cases where applicants hold or use more than one type of passport. Member States noted that national instructions and practices vary, and agreed to continue monitoring the issue.

The launch of the Entry/Exit System (EES) on 12 October 2025 was also discussed in the LSC framework. EUDEL and Airline Liaison Officers briefed Member States on the progressive roll-out, biometric capture, practical implications for visa-required and visa-exempt travellers, and the need for accurate communication to applicants, carriers and local partners.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The harmonisation of the list of supporting documents for visa applications in China had been completed by the local LSC and formally accepted by the Commission before the 2025 reporting period. No need to amend the existing harmonised list was identified in 2025.

Member States continued to monitor practical implementation and exchanged information on documentation requirements in the context of discussions on visa shopping, fraudulent supporting documents and divergent practices in specific categories of applications. No major difficulties requiring a formal revision of the harmonised list were reported.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

No China-specific MEV cascade was in force in 2025. The China-specific cascade proposal prepared locally in 2024 had been transmitted to Brussels, but was not approved. Member States were therefore reminded that the standard cascade under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code applies.

The matter remained relevant for local coordination. Member States discussed the implications of the absence of a China-specific cascade and the need to ensure consistency in the application of the standard rules. The issue was also linked to discussions on ADS visas, Public Affairs Passports and general efforts to reduce divergent practices among Member States.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

The LSC continued to serve as a platform for harmonising practical visa-related procedures.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

The exchange of information within the LSC remained active throughout 2025.

Visa statistics were discussed at several meetings. At the beginning of the year, Member States considered moving to quarterly reporting. In June, the group agreed to switch back to monthly statistics sharing. In August, an updated template was presented, with the categories "Applied", "Issued" and "Refused". Later in the year, it was recalled that figures shared for local coordination should refer to visa applications received rather than visas effectively issued. EUDEL informed Member States that the HIVE platform would be implemented to facilitate the sharing of statistics and reduce excessive email correspondence. Pending full implementation of HIVE, statistics continued to be exchanged manually.

External service providers and VAC monitoring were a major focus of information exchange in 2025. Member States shared experiences on appointment management, application tracking, customer service, premium services and value-added service fees. Furthermore, nine member states formed a working group to share the inspections of VAC and developed a joint check list.

Information was also exchanged on ADS visas and travel agencies. Member States discussed whether the existing sanctioning system for ADS agencies remained applicable, and EUDEL recalled that it continued to apply.

Travel medical insurance did not give rise to significant specific concerns in 2025. No major problems linked to the implementation of TMI rules were reported in the LSC meetings.

The use of VISMail and the Visa Information System did not give rise to specific major concerns in the LSC meetings.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

The Schengen visa information campaign developed with the support of the International Organization for Migration remained an important initiative.

The LSC also supported the development of standard operating procedures for a referral mechanism for potential victims of trafficking identified in the visa process or other consular interactions.

## **4. Challenges**

Several challenges identified in the 2024 report remained relevant in 2025.

First, harmonisation of practices continued to require attention.

Second, the absence of a China-specific MEV cascade remained a point of discussion.

Third, the monitoring of external service providers became one of the main operational challenges in 2025.

Fourth, visa shopping, fraudulent supporting documents and the role of unauthorised intermediaries remained important challenges.

Fifth, the exchange of visa statistics should be further streamlined by implementing the HIVE platform.

Sixth, Expectations on further visa figures increasingly vary among MS including on newly emerging trends in touristic travel from China to European destinations with statistics for business-related visa recently becoming more volatile against the overall backdrop of CN-EU/MS economic relations.

## **5. Other issues**

The extension of China's visa-free entry regime for most EU citizens was discussed in the LSC as relevant for workload planning, public information and broader mobility trends.

No other major issue requiring inclusion in the annual report was identified.



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN COLOMBIA**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

16 Schengen Member States (MS) are present in Colombia, i.e. Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain and Switzerland.

The following MS are represented for Schengen visa applications:

- Slovenia and Latvia are represented by Germany
- Malta by Italy
- Estonia by Poland
- Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway by Sweden.
- Greece, Lithuania and Slovakia by Spain
- Luxembourg by Belgium

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

Three meetings were held under the chair of the EU Delegation, which also drew up the reports. The meetings were well attended.

**3. State of play**

**3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

MS did not indicate specific problems relating to the implementation of the Visa Code, given that the issuance of Schengen visas was rare. Colombians do not need a visa to enter the Schengen area for tourist reasons.

**3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

There were no specific needs identified.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

MS did not express any concerns about the Art. 24 (2) cascade rules, also because tourist visas are not necessary for Colombians.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

N/A.

#### **a. Exchange of information**

The LSC coordination meetings allowed the exchange of information, notably on the situation of asylum applications lodged by Colombian nationals in Europe, including possible links with the migration situation in the United States and its impact on migration flows from Colombia to Europe. The Group discussed the Commission's proposal to include Colombia on the list of safe countries of origin and its potential implications for the accelerated processing of asylum applications.

Discussions further covered the implementation of the Entry/Exit System (EES) and ETIAS, in view of the entry force of EES on 12 October 2025.

The Group also exchanged views on the EU Emergency Travel Document (ETD) and how to ensure acceptance by Colombia.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

N/A.

## **4. Challenges**

The 2024 report identified as challenge the possible increase in asylum applications and visa abuses in 2025, also because of the reintroduction of visa requirements in the UK in 2024, and how to best react.

Throughout 2025, one MS did not identify an increase in abuses or misuse of Schengen visas, nor an irregular increase of Schengen visa applications. However, one MS noticed an increase in unfounded asylum applications, triggering a mission by a country representative to Colombia to better understand the phenomenon. In parallel, Colombia initiated a national campaign to prevent asylum abuse to reduce asylum requests by Colombians in Europe.

Another MS observed a notable increase in the issuance of the obligation to leave the territory after tourist stays or after the expiration of the visas issued. In the same country, Colombia in 2025 reached

third place after Haiti and Venezuela in terms of protection requests (pending consolidation of figures). This country also used quota for working holiday visas, intended for cultural exchange of young adults under the age of 31, in order to reduce the migration risk of these young people who might overstay their permits. In 2026, this country will review conditions and quota of this type of visa. The same country expects that the Entry/Exit System (EES) and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) in 2026 would improve the management of external borders by automating identity checks of travelers, to make them more reliable and efficient and would allow Member States to ensure better information sharing.

## **5. Other issues**

N/A.

The report has been approved by LSC members present in Bogotá via written procedure.



**COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET  
LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC) EN REPUBLIQUE DU CONGO**

**RAPPORT 2025**

**1. Introduction**

Quatre Etats membres de l'espace Schengen ont des ambassades à Brazzaville, à savoir l'Allemagne, la Belgique, la France et l'Italie. Toutefois, l'Allemagne et la Belgique ne délivrent pas de visas Schengen en République du Congo.

Trois entités délivrent les visas Schengen en République du Congo : la section consulaire de l'ambassade d'Italie à Brazzaville, la section consulaire de l'ambassade de France à Brazzaville et le consulat général de France à Pointe Noire.

La France délivre des visas en représentation de l'Allemagne, l'Autriche, la Belgique, l'Espagne, la Grèce, l'Islande, la Lituanie, le Luxembourg, Malte, les Pays-Bas, le Portugal et la République Tchèque.

L'Italie délivre des visas en représentation de la Slovaquie, la Slovénie et la Suède.

L'Espagne et la Suisse délivrent un nombre très limité de visas Schengen aux ressortissants de la République du Congo par l'intermédiaire de leurs ambassades basées à Kinshasa.

Les Etats membres de l'espace Schengen suivants ne sont ni présents ni représentés en République du Congo : la Bulgarie, le Danemark, l'Estonie, la Finlande, la Hongrie, la Lettonie, le Liechtenstein, la Norvège, la Pologne et la Roumanie.

**2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2025**

Des échanges de coordination consulaire entre les Etats membres représentés à Brazzaville ont eu lieu régulièrement. Ainsi, l'Allemagne et la Belgique ont parfois participé à des échanges sur les visas, même si l'Allemagne et la Belgique ne délivre pas des visas Schengen en République du Congo. Toutefois, la problématique des faux documents (voir point 4) les concerne aussi pour la légalisation de documents congolais.

Spécifiquement sur les visas Schengen, suite aux échanges entre Etats membres de l'UE, une rencontre a eu lieu au Ministère des Affaires étrangères en juillet 2025 avec tous les services congolais concernés afin d'expliquer le système, insister sur les délais et la qualité de la documentation et clarifier des doutes éventuels par une séance de questions-réponses.

Les autorités congolaises ont également été informées sur le nouveau système d'entrée-sortie (EES) et le nouveau format de l'ETD (*Emergency Travel Document*) de l'UE.

### **3. État des lieux**

#### **3.1 Application du Code des Visas**

Les deux Etats membres qui délivrent des visas Schengen aux ressortissants et résidents de la République du Congo sur le territoire national ont une bonne connaissance de leurs obligations en matière de coopération au titre du Code. Ils échangent leurs informations de manière fluide.

La France gère le plus grand nombre de demandes de visas Schengen en République du Congo avec environ 24 000 demandes en 2025 pour 12 500 visas Schengen délivrés, dont seulement 450 visas pour les autres Etats membres de l'espace Schengen représentés par la France (pour 1 100 demandes). A ceci s'ajoute environ 6 700 demandes de visas de long séjour, notamment des visas étudiants, avec 2 200 visas délivrés. Les délais d'attente pour les rendez-vous ont été très courts en 2025. Le taux de refus pour les visas Schengen est autour de 50% à cause des faux documents.

L'Italie a géré environs 1 600 demandes de visa Schengen en 2025, mais avec un taux de refus important autour de 75% à cause du phénomène des demandes par des personnes qui ont déjà été refusés le visa par la France, ou qui ont en réalité la France comme destination principale du séjour, mais qui font demande auprès de la section consulaire de l'ambassade d'Italie pour éviter les frais du prestataire de service externe engagé par la France. Le nombre de visas géré par l'Italie pour les autres Etats membres de l'espace Schengen qu'elle représente en République du Congo est insignifiant. L'Italie a également géré 1 300 demandes de visas de long séjour, notamment des visas étudiants et des religieux. L'Ambassade d'Italie à Brazzaville à la responsabilité pour le visa long séjour des demandeurs de la République Démocratique du Congo.

#### **3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs**

Les ambassades et consulats des Etats membres qui délivrent des visas Schengen en République du Congo affichent des informations sur les documents justificatifs à soumettre en fonction du type de visas demandé sur leurs sites. Les exigences documentaires sont déjà bien harmonisées.

### **3.3 Estimation du besoin d'adapter les règles générales relatives à la délivrance des visas à entrées multiples aux demandeurs en vertu de l'Article 24(2) du Code des Visas (« cascades MEV »)**

Les Etats membres qui délivrent des visas Schengen en République du Congo n'ont pas soulevé un besoin d'adapter les règles générales relatives à la délivrance des visas à entrées multiples aux demandeurs en vertu de l'Article 24(2) du Code des Visas.

### **3.4 Harmonisation des procédures**

Les Etats membres qui délivrent des visas Schengen en République du Congo considèrent que l'harmonisation des pratiques est déjà acquise.

### **3.4 Echange d'informations**

L'utilisation du Visa Information System centralisé facilite l'échange d'informations et empêche la délivrance de visas Schengen à des personnes qui ont déjà été refusés le visa Schengen récemment ou par un autre consulat, sauf si leurs conditions ont changé.

### **3.5 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC**

La coordination européenne et le dialogue avec les autorités congolaises sur le problème des faux documents continuent, en Equipe Europe et bilatéralement par les deux Etats membres qui délivrent des visas Schengen en République du Congo. Une répétition de la réunion avec tous les services congolais concernés est prévue, car les problèmes avec des faux documents, y compris des fausses missions officielles, persistent.

## **4. Défis**

Malheureusement, les pratiques de soumission de faux documents persistent, ce qui explique le taux de refus élevé, parfois même à des personnes qui auraient pu obtenir le visa en soumettant un dossier honnête, mais qui ont fait recours à des « services » par des escrocs qui prétendent pouvoir « faciliter » la délivrance du visa Schengen, mais qui en réalité agissent par la production de faux documents (relevés de comptes bancaires inexistantes, ordres de mission avec des fausses signatures, documents d'étude falsifiés, etc.).

Les autorités congolaises sont peu actives pour lutter contre ce phénomène. Elles ont toutefois pris des mesures ponctuelles, à la demande des Etats membres, pour arrêter le trafic de documents par certains cadres de l'administration publique et pour chercher de démanteler les réseaux des escrocs qui prétendent pouvoir « faciliter » la délivrance de visas ou qui délivrent même des faux visas Schengen.

Les Etats membres qui émettent des visas sont régulièrement critiqués pour le nombre élevé de refus de visas, y compris par des représentants de l'Etat congolais. La réunion de juillet 2025 avec tous les services concernés avait comme objectif d'améliorer la compréhension et le respect des procédures par les congolais afin de réduire le nombre de refus par une meilleure qualité de la documentation et l'élimination des faux documents et demandes tardives.

## **5. Divers**

La République du Congo a fait partie des pays nommés dans une proclamation du Président Trump le 4 juin 2025, suspendant l'entrée aux Etats-Unis, au titre de la protection contre l'immigration illégale. Une raison invoquée par la proclamation est, entre autres problèmes, le fait que trop de voyageurs de la République du Congo restent aux États-Unis au-delà de la durée autorisée. Ces restrictions de voyage n'ont cependant pas eu d'impact remarqué sur les demandes de visa pour la zone Schengen.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO CÔTE D'IVOIRE

## COOPÉRATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET LES ÉTATS-MEMBRES (LSC) EN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

### RAPPORT 2025

#### 1. Introduction

Six États membres de l'espace Schengen (Belgique, Allemagne, Espagne, France, Italie et Suisse) délivrent des visas Schengen en Côte d'Ivoire. Quinze (15) autres États membres (Autriche, République tchèque, Estonie, Grèce, Finlande, Hongrie, Liechtenstein, Lituanie, Luxembourg, Lettonie, Malte, Pays-Bas, Pologne, Portugal, Suède et Slovaquie) sont représentés par ces États membres pour la délivrance des visas.

La Belgique représente l'Autriche, les Pays-Bas, la Suède et le Luxembourg ; la Suisse représente la République tchèque et le Liechtenstein ; l'Allemagne représente l'Estonie, la Finlande et la Slovaquie ; l'Espagne représente la Pologne ; la France représente la Hongrie, la Lettonie, la Lituanie, Malte, l'Islande et la Grèce ; l'Italie représente la Slovénie.

#### 2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2025

En 2025, trois (3) réunions de la LSC se sont tenues les 4 février, 3 mars et 25 novembre. Aussi, des réunions consulaires spécifiques ont été consacrées à la préparation aux crises consulaires. L'ensemble de ces réunions a réuni de manière régulière les EM délivrant des visas Schengen ou représentés localement. La présidence a été assurée par la DUE, laquelle a également été chargée d'établir et de diffuser des projets de comptes rendus.

Dans un contexte électoral particulièrement sensible, le renforcement de la coordination consulaire de crise a constitué une priorité. À ce titre, une formation dédiée à la gestion des crises consulaires a été organisée et complétée par un exercice pratique. Les travaux ont permis d'aboutir à la mise en place de dispositifs consulaires conjoints de préparation aux crises en Côte d'Ivoire, y compris les canaux de communication et les contacts.

#### 3. État des lieux

Les EM disposent des capacités nécessaires pour assurer les tâches prévues par le Code des visas. Toutefois, l'année a été caractérisée par un niveau élevé de demandes de visas. Dans ce contexte, les délais de rendez-vous sont restés longs dans certains consulats notamment celui de la France en raison du volume des dossiers et des exigences de vérification.

De plus, une tendance à la hausse des demandes a été constatée, provenant de ressortissants de pays tiers résidant ou transitant en Côte d'Ivoire, notamment en provenance du Mali et du Burkina Faso, en raison de l'instabilité politique persistante dans ces régions et des crises diplomatiques avec certains EM.

### 3.1 Visas en 2025

En 2025, les États membres délivrant des visas Schengen en Côte d'Ivoire ont enregistré des volumes relativement élevés de demandes :

**FR** : 78 000 visas en 2025, contre 73 000 en 2024 et 65 000 en 2023. Le taux de refus s'établit à 30 %, en baisse par rapport à 2024 (34 %).

**IT** : 6 177 visas en 2025, dont 3084 visas Schengen avec un taux de refus de 35,5%, contre 6 396 en 2024, dont 4056 visas Schengen avec un taux de refus de 43,2%.

**BE** : 4 009 visas en 2025, contre 4 003 en 2024. Ces chiffres incluent les visas délivrés pour les États membres représentés (NL, AT, SE, LU).

**DE** : 1 719 visas en 2025 avec un taux de refus qui s'élève à 44%, principalement en raison de la faible qualité des dossiers présentés.

**ES** : 6 701 demandes de visas enregistrées en 2025, dont 6 241 visas Schengen, contre 4 617 demandes en 2024. Le taux de refus s'élève à 31,9 % en 2025, contre 28,7 % en 2024.

**CH** : 2 164 visas en 2025, contre 2 060 en 2024. Le taux de refus s'élève à 38 % en 2025, contre 34 % l'année précédente.

### 3.2 Application du Code des Visas

Une intensification et une sophistication croissantes des pratiques frauduleuses ont été observées au cours de l'année :

- Les EM ont relevé une professionnalisation des intermédiaires frauduleux (officines), certaines structures disposant de moyens matériels importants leur permettant de produire des dossiers fictifs (faux compte bancaire, actes d'état civil...) de plus en plus élaborés, susceptibles de franchir les contrôles.
- La fraude documentaire et le visa shopping demeurent un problème et ont augmenté par rapport aux précédentes années.
- Une nouvelle méthode de fraude a été observée, consistant en la réutilisation d'éléments issus de dossiers authentiques, sans lien avec le demandeur concerné. Cette pratique concerne d'autant des demandes impliquant des mineurs et a donné lieu à des refus et à des interceptions récurrentes lors des contrôles.

- Coopération avec des prestataires de services externes. Avec VFS : FR : satisfaction globale ; IT et BE : insatisfaction liée à une baisse de la qualité du service.
- On constate environ une arrestation par semaine pour fraude au visa touristique, certaines agences de voyage se sont spécialisées dans la proposition de prestations de services complets jusqu'au visa
- On constate que la complicité se joue à tous les niveaux impliquant tant des agents du secteur privé comme du secteur public.

### **3.3 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs.**

Même si elle n'est pas formalisée, les EM considèrent que celle-ci est déjà réalisée. S'il y a du « visa shopping », ce n'est pas sur la base des documents demandés mais plutôt de l'encombrement du circuit de dépôt de visa.

### **3.4 Estimation du besoin d'adapter les règles générales relatives à la délivrance des visas à entrées multiples aux demandeurs en vertu de l'Article 24(2) du Code des Visas (« cascades MEV »)**

Pas de besoin particulier signalé.

### **3.5 Harmonisation des procédures**

Des échanges réguliers ont lieu concernant les modes de vérification des pièces justificatives et les types de fraude constatés. De très légers écarts de tarif entre consulats Schengen existent, mais ils ne paraissent pas problématiques.

La plupart des EM ont reçu l'ETD mais seulement IT en a déjà délivré. Les autres EM attendent des instructions plus précises.

### **3.6 Échange d'informations**

L'échange d'informations dans le cadre des réunions LSC et en temps réel (group WhatsApp) inclut:

- partage des statistiques
- cas de fraude et nouvelles techniques de fraude
- délais de rendez-vous
- application du Code des visas
- coopération avec les autorités locales et les compagnies locales
- utilisation du VISMail et du Visa Information System
- offre de formation concernant la fraude documentaire
- préparation à la crise consulaire

#### 4. Défis

L'identification de la fraude documentaire reste un défi d'envergure qui nécessite une mise à jour et un partage constant des informations.

Le manque de réactivité et de cohérence de réponses de la part des autorités en l'occurrence le MAE pose beaucoup de difficultés.

Le déficit de ressources matérielles pour le bon contrôle des documents (IT, CH)

Pour la CH, l'authentification des documents en provenance du Mali, du Burkina Faso, du Libéria et de la Guinée demeure difficile faute de points de contact et d'étroite collaboration avec les autorités respectives. La même difficulté est également signalée par l'IT concernant le Libéria.

#### 5. Divers

Citoyens européens en prison : FR 5, IT 5, BE 1, DE 3, en somme 14 citoyens.

Les autorités ne notifient toujours pas les EM de la présence de leurs citoyens en prison. Les passeports des prisonniers sont saisis par la DST sans retour vers l'ambassade. Les autorisations des visites sont de plus en plus difficiles à obtenir, qui plus est avec une longue procédure. Les demandes d'entraide judiciaire progressent bien que la communication soit difficile avec le ministère de la justice. Par ailleurs, la surpopulation carcérale en Côte d'Ivoire reste critique (estimée à 600 %). Les citoyens européens disposent toutefois d'installations séparées avec des conditions minimales respectées.

Cas de décès : FR 55, CH 5-7, IT 6 (dont 2 rapatriements du corps), BE 5 avec pour la majorité des cas le rapatriement de corps. Il convient de noter des problèmes récurrents liés au rapatriement, particulièrement pour les personnes ayant résidé longtemps sur place et en l'absence d'un point de contact dans le pays d'origine.



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO CUBA**

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN CUBA  
2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

Sixteen Schengen EU Member States are present in Cuba (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden) and all are represented in Havana. Cyprus is also invited to the LSC meetings. From non-EU Schengen members, Norway and Switzerland are present.

Number of unrepresented Member States have agreements with the embassies in Cuba. Denmark, Finland, Estonia and Iceland are represented by Sweden; Luxembourg is represented by Belgium; Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia by Hungary; Malta by Spain and Liechtenstein by Switzerland. Croatia is not represented.

Even though Norway is present, Sweden represents them in issuing Schengen-visa.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

During 2025, four regular meetings of the Local Schengen Coordination group took place (in February, May, September and November), chaired by the EUDEL Consular Correspondent.

The meetings of the LSC group are open to participation of non-EU Schengen Member States (Norway and Switzerland).

All meetings were held in person at the EU Delegation and were very well-attended.

After each meeting, draft minutes were circulated by the EUDEL.

**3. State of play**

**3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

LSC exchanges were well-attended and allowed sharing the important information and appropriate action when needed.

The group provided regular updates on the migratory situation in the country. A wide range of other issues were discussed, including Schengen statistics; visa refusal rates; the percentage of no-shows for tourist visas; trends in false marriages with EU citizens; unclaimed passports; long-term work visas; fraudulent documents; applicant profiles and risk assessments; visa services; local MEV cascades in accordance with Article 24 of the Visa Code; accepted travel insurance policies; and other practical matters, such as accepted methods of payment at consulates.

The Visa Code Training course and the Entry/Exit System (EES) were also discussed.

As regards the handling of visa applications, **outsourcing to private companies is not possible** due to local legislation. Each embassy therefore organises its own logistics for the entire procedure, including the processing of paper and digital files and all direct interactions with visa applicants. This covers in-person interviews, submission of original documents and passports, and the final return of passports with the issued Schengen visa.

Some Member State consulates face additional challenges due to an insufficient number of consular staff in the context of significant pressure from a high volume of visa applications.

Visa appointment services continued to present challenges throughout 2025. Several consulates sought solutions to prevent malicious practices, including multiple registrations followed by no-shows and the resale of appointments. Online and telephone appointment systems were frequently overloaded. To address these issues, most Member States introduced a shorter registration period, limited to one month prior to the intended date of travel. Some consulates also opted to manage appointments via e-mail.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The LSC proposal for an update of the harmonised list of supporting documents to be provided by visa applicants was officially adopted on 5 March, and following consultation with all Member States, 17 March was agreed as the common start date for implementation of the Act.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code (MEV cascades)**

For the moment that local circumstances do not pose problems in applying art 24.

The possibility to enter other LAC countries as for example Mexico, Panama, Dominican Republic with MEV leads to more applications often resulting in rejections due to lack of a visible intention to enter the country claimed as a destination.

### 3.4 Harmonisation of practices

The unification of Member States Consulates practices in relation with the accepted mode and currency for the fees was among the issues discussed by the LSC.

LSC also discussed a recommendation to create a short document of shared “**risk profiles**”, identifying low- and high-risk applicant profiles which may support the Member States embassies’ visa sections in their daily work.

### 3.5 Exchange of information

#### Quarterly statistics trends

Consolidated statistics were regularly submitted by the MS and served for useful exchanges during the LSC meetings.

#### Fraud

Documents issued locally require careful scrutiny due to a high risk of falsification. Verification is often complicated by limited cooperation from relevant institutions, in particular banks. In a difficult local context marked by bureaucratic delays, some visa applicants resort to forgery, most notably in relation to bank statements and civil registry documents. Cases of false travel plans and reservations have also been identified and therefore require systematic verification. Several MS have data on individuals involved in printing fake visas.

Member States reported an increase in attempts at fraudulent practices. With a growing number of EU citizens requesting visas for their Cuban spouses, the issue of marriages of convenience for the purpose of obtaining a visa was regularly discussed within the LSC. In many cases, applicants were unable to provide basic information about their EU spouse, or submitted travel plans based on false reservations. These fraudulent activities appear to be well organised and, in some instances, facilitated by EU citizens. There have also been incidents of verbal abuse and, in rare cases, threats directed at consular staff.

Visa shopping continues to exist. In addition, Schengen visas are sometimes used for purposes other than travel to Europe, as they allow visa-free entry to Mexico (*the entrance with MEV is possible after the first entrance in the Schengen area*) and other countries in Central America.

Regarding the fake documents Member States also discussed the proposal future meetings to include examples of falsified documents, with the detecting embassy sharing copies for reference.

## **Cooperation with local authorities and companies (e.g. banks, employers, transport companies)**

Currently not applicable given the nature of largely state-run economy and the domestic legislation.

## **Cooperation with external service providers and monitoring**

It is impossible for private companies to develop business in this area.

From July 2025 Spain is negotiating the establishment of the Indian external service provider BLS in Cuba. Even though it is not still 100% sure, MINREX have recently agreed and BLS will probably be operating on the island by S2-2026.

## **Travel medical insurance (TMI)**

All MS, except two, accept TMI from the Cuban state insurance company ASSISTUR/ESEN.

One Ms only accept them from officials (diplomatic or service passports).

## **VIS-Mail**

VIS-MAIL can be used when secure transmission is needed which seldom occurs in practice. Usually, the local exchange of information on ad hoc files is often done orally or through the regular contact between the member states.

## **Other issues**

The issue with cancelled ESTA for EU nationals by the U.S. authorities after a visit to Cuba remains a matter of concern.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

N/A

## **4. Challenges**

The major challenges to be addressed will be linked to the risk of migration flows.

## **5. Other issues**

**The Schengen member's states present at the LSC in Cuba accepted this final version.**



**EUROPEAN UNION**  
**DELEGATION TO DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN SANTO DOMINGO, DOMINICAN  
REPUBLIC (DR)**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

There are six Schengen Agreement Countries (henceforth ‘SAC’) present in the Dominican Republic: Germany (DE), Spain (ES), France (FR), Italy (IT), the Netherlands (NL) and Switzerland (CH).

In terms of visas:

- NL covers Luxembourg (LU), Belgium (BE), Finland (FI), Norway (NO), Hungary (HU) and Latvia (LVA).
- FR covers Denmark (DK) and Iceland (ISL).
- DE covers Estonia (EE) and Slovakia (SK).
- ES covers Portugal (PT), Greece (GR), Czech Republic (CZ), Lithuania (LT), Sweden (SE) and Malta (MT).
- CH covers Austria (AT), Slovenia (SL) and the Principality of Liechtenstein (FL).

Only 4 SAC Members do not have local visa agreements: Bulgaria (BG), Croatia (HR), Poland (PL) and Romania (RO). Dominican citizens applying for visas to these SAC Members, have to do so through the Consulates at the Embassies in Cuba, the US, Panama and Colombia, respectively.

Several SAC outsource visa applications.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

In 2025, the EUDEL organised 3 LCC/LSC meetings on:

- February 3<sup>rd</sup>
- July 1<sup>st</sup>
- September 23<sup>rd</sup>

On November 11<sup>th</sup>, the Delegation organized a consular crisis exercise.

### 3. State of play

#### 3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Whereas in previous years, SAC Members did not report any issues regarding the application of the EU Visa Code, including its last changes [Regulation (EU) 2021/1134 of 07 July 2021], topics discussed in 2025 were:

- **The lack of visa agreements with Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland and Romania.** Members discussed whether visas may be emitted if these countries are the main travel destination. After consulting DG HOME, SAC Members were informed that this is possible, if the corresponding Consulate authorizes in writing.
- **Application of the cascade system.** SAC Members analysed the application of the cascade system, concluding all fully apply it in line with to the Visa Code. Additionally, SAC discussed the possibility of flexibilization of the cascade system, but no decision has been taken.

#### 3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

All SAC members request the required documents established under the Visa Code, however, some ask additional documentation. SAC members have not reached consensus on the need for harmonization of these additional documents.

#### 3.3 Adaptation of the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')

As explained under point 3.1, SAC discussed the possibility of flexibilization of the cascade system but no decision has been taken.

#### 3.4 Harmonisation of practices

Based on information received from SAC, all practices remain harmonized to the highest extent possible, in line with the Visa Code provisions.

#### 3.5 Exchange of information

Exchanges principally focussed on the following topics:

- Even though final 2025 data are not yet available, consulates reported **rejection rates** between 18 and 43%, although the weighted average across all consulates is expected to be in the range of 20-25%. Among the main reasons are migratory risks, lack of verifiable financial means and visa-shopping/unclear travel purposes.

- **Forged documentation** continued to be an issue in 2025, although forging of governmental documents (e.g. bank statements and civil registry documents) has been on a declining trend. An important milestone was the implementation of a new regulation by the Bank Supervising Authority, obliging banks to add digital verification means to financial statements as of 2025 (more details are presented in 3.6). However, SAC continued to identify forging of documents by travel agencies and visa consultants.
- SAC continued to report cases of **visa shopping**, often facilitated by travel agencies. In this sense, Members highlighted forged itineraries by travel agencies or ‘visa consultants’ and the difficulty to verify these itineraries and bookings.
- As was the case in previous years, SAC reported **long waiting times for visa appointments**, ranging from 2 weeks to 3 months. Moreover, new time slots for appointments often fill-up almost immediately. In line with 2023 and 2024, EUMS identified false appointments from travel agents and visa facilitators as the main cause. The difficulty of obtaining appointments may also be one of the reasons for visa-shopping. To solve this issue, some SAC members offer fast-track appointments, where clients can obtain an appointment between 2 to 5 days. However, other SAC members eliminated existing systems of VIP appointments. Related to the previous topic, SAC Members discussed **maximum daily request capacity**. Minimum capacity currently stands at 12 requests a day per front desk visa officer.
- SAC Members discussed how to **manage last-minute requests from VIPs** (mostly government officials). These requests often generate misunderstandings and complaints. Members agree these requests require case-by-case assessments.
- During 2025, a recurrent topic was **the possibility for visa applicants to complete missing documentation after the visa appointment**. Not all SAC Members offer this possibility.

### 3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Following concerns raised by EUD on the falsification of bank statements as one of the main reasons for visa rejection, the Bank Supervisory Authority (BSA) agreed end-2023 to start a pilot exercise introducing digital verification methods for bank statements. Several Member States have participated in the pilot. Subsequently in May 2024, the BSA issued a new regulation obliging all banks to add a digital verification method. Smaller banks will have the possibility to use a website hosted by the Dominican Telecommunications Authority (INDOTEL). Almost all banks effectively implemented the digital verification method by end of January 2025. The LSC group has followed-up on the implementation and effectiveness of the measure and members appreciated the successful cooperation with the Dominican authorities.

On request of the EU Heads of Mission, the EUDEL developed a **joint communication campaign on visa requirements**. The social media campaign aimed to inform the public of the general rules on Schengen applications and the correct procedures of application and was very well received.

#### 4. Challenges

For the next annual report, relevant subjects to be addressed are:

- Introduction of **biometric passports**. The contract was awarded to the Franco-American consortium EMT and roll-out started in January 2026. The Ministry of Foreign affairs has requested clarification on the validity of Schengen visas in cancelled passports. While EU legislation and case law allow citizens to travel with both passports (the cancelled passport with valid visum in combination with the new biometric passport), Member States also pointed to the importance ensuring that border control agencies are aware. They requested some additional time for internal consultations, before the Delegation sends the official reply note.
- Follow-up with BSA on a number of outstanding issues with the digital verification method.
- Follow-up of rejection rates.
- Follow-up of waiting times for visa appointments.
- Monitoring of visa shopping and forged documentation by travel agencies and ‘visa consultants’, such as hotel bookings and itineraries.

#### 5. Other issues

No other issues of a specific importance raised by the EUMS/SAC in the reporting period.



**COOPERACIÓN LOCAL SCHENGEN (CLS) EN ECUADOR**  
**INFORME 2025**

**1. Introducción**

Seis Estados miembros del tratado Schengen están presentes (Alemania, España, Francia, Hungría, Italia y Suiza) y catorce son representados en Ecuador por alguno de los países antes citados: Austria (representado por Alemania), Bélgica (representado por Francia), Eslovenia y Polonia (representados por Suiza), Estonia (representado por Italia), República Checa y Eslovaquia (representado por Hungría), Finlandia, Grecia, Lituania, Luxemburgo, Malta, Países Bajos, Portugal (representados por España). Hay Consulados Generales de España en Quito y en Guayaquil. El Consulado General de España en Quito procesa visados de corta estancia para viajar a Grecia, Luxemburgo, Malta y Portugal, para los residentes en todo el Ecuador, y los Consulados Generales de España en Quito y en Guayaquil, para viajar a Países Bajos, Finlandia y Lituania, para los residentes en sus respectivas demarcaciones. La Embajada de Francia en Quito procesa visados de corta estancia para viajar a Bélgica, para los residentes en todo el Ecuador. La Embajada de la República Federal de Alemania en Quito procesa visados de corta estancia para viajar a Alemania y Austria. La Embajada de Alemania tiene la demarcación consular para todo el territorio nacional de Ecuador y las Islas Galápagos. La Sección Consular de la Embajada de Hungría en Quito procesa visados Schengen para viajar, además de Hungría, a la República Checa y Eslovaquia. La Embajada de Suiza representa a Letonia y expide visados de corta duración para Polonia, Eslovenia y Letonia.

**2. Reuniones del grupo CLS celebradas en 2025**

La actividad de solicitudes de visados marcó un incremento durante 2025.

Se celebraron tres reuniones de coordinación: en el 28.1.2025, el 28.4.2025 y el 2.10.2025.

**3. Situación actual**

**3.1 Aplicación del Código de visados**

El intercambio de información y la coordinación entre los Cónsules en relación con el Código de Visados y su aplicación son satisfactorios.

### **3.2 Evaluación de la necesidad de armonizar la lista de documentos justificantes**

No existe la necesidad de una mayor armonización de la lista de documentos justificantes.

### **3.3 Adaptación de las normas generales sobre la expedición de visados de entrada múltiple para los solicitantes en virtud del Artículo 24(2) del Código de visados (“cascadas”)**

Una propuesta de revisión de las normas generales sobre la expedición de visados de entrada múltiple para ciertas categorías de viajes (negocios, culturales, académicos) fue enviada a Bruselas al Comité de visas. Este último hizo unos comentarios que fueron presentados a los consulados locales. La revisión de éstos en el marco del CLS está en curso. Por ahora, los Estados miembros no consideran que existe la necesidad de mayor coordinación en este tema.

### **3.4 Armonización de las prácticas**

En las reuniones de CLS se comparan prácticas sobre distintos asuntos; mencionar la especial coordinación que existe en cuanto a la lucha contra la falsificación de documentos, y el problema de la saturación de citas debido a la alta demanda de visados Schengen después de la pandemia y la presencia de agencias tramitadoras. También el problema de visa shopping entre Estados miembros.

### **3.5 Intercambio de información**

### **3.6 Cualquier otra iniciativa tomada en la CLS**

El trabajo para la actualización del marco común consular de la UE se ha intensificado en los primeros meses del 2025 con la coordinación del consulado de HU. El documento final fue aprobado por todos los Consulados Schengen y presentado a la Sede.

## **4. Dificultades**

El número de solicitudes de visados Schengen durante 2025 aumentó y con ellas se incrementaron también los problemas, como por ejemplo:

- Presentación de documentos falsificados;
- Presencia de tramitadores
- Escasez de citas disponibles
- “Visa shopping”

A raíz de estos problemas, las tasas de rechazos alcanzaron el 25-30% del número total de las solicitudes de visas.

## **5. Varios**

El tema de la exención de visados Schengen para los ciudadanos ecuatorianos es de alta prioridad para Ecuador en las relaciones con la UE; se ha abordado en todos los intercambios de alto nivel y de diálogo político con la UE, y también con los EEMM. Con el gobierno de Noboa, las expectativas de una exención con una posible revisión por parte de la UE de la lista de los países exentos de visas se han revisado con una posición mucho más prudente y de largo plazo, teniendo en cuenta el aumento de los rechazos de los consulados de la zona Schengen. Sin embargo, de vez en cuando el tema sale para fines de política interna.

**Todas las Embajadas/Consulados participantes en la Cooperación Local Schengen han aprobado el presente informe.**



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT**

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN EGYPT**

**2025 REPORT**

## **1. Introduction**

Twenty-six EU Member States are present and represented in Egypt and one (Luxembourg) is represented by another Member State (Belgium).

Nine have Consulates in Alexandria (AT, BE, DK, FR, EL, HU, IT, MT, SK), three in Hurghada (AT, BE, IT), two in Sharm El Sheikh (BE, IT), two in Luxor (IT, ES), one in Port Said (DK), one in El Gouna (SI) and one in Suez (MT). Among non-EU Schengen countries, Norway and Switzerland have diplomatic representations and issue visas.

## **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

Five LSC meetings were held in 2025: 3 February, 3 March, 7 April, 24 June and 6 November.

All of these were regular meetings which were well-attended. EUDEL chaired the LSC meetings, accompanied by the rotating EU Council Presidency (PL and DK). Usually some non-Schengen States also attended the LSC meetings (CY, IE). All reports and minutes from the LSC meetings are drafted by EUDEL with greenlight of the rotating presidency. Coordination with the LSC mainly take place in Cairo as most visas are issued there.

## **3. State of play**

### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

The LSC meeting in Egypt in 2025 addressed several issues regarding the implementation of the Visa Code. In general, the demand for visas is high and the workload for Embassies and Consulates is substantive. The number of slots/appointments/day for visas requests in Cairo varies. There are issues with no-shows, a black market for visa appointments, as well as groups or companies blocking slots at once as soon as they come available. Waiting times after a visa application is filled is usually around 2-3 weeks for issuing a visa, for some countries this can take up to two months. Some of the Schengen States divide their applicants into groups, like business, tourism, special events, so that they can prioritise certain applicants when needed. Some of the Schengen States work with external service providers, like VFS and TLS. Some states are content with their external service provider, whereas others feel they have more control over appointments because they do not use any.

Visa shopping is a common practice in Egypt also in 2025. Many of the smaller Schengen states in Egypt deal with visa shoppers, who are trying to bypass longer waiting times for popular travel destinations. Under these visa shoppers is a small amount of people who are actually good candidates for the other states, in some cases even in need of an urgent Schengen visa. As they however do not have an actual intention of traveling to the Schengen state they applied to, they get rejected. The issue was discussed several times at LCC with one Member State (MT) pointing to the fact that very few other Member States had available visa appointments, which affected the ones who does, as ‘shoppers’ will go where there are available appointments. No short-term plan to overcome the issue was found.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The Decision on the list of supporting documents to be submitted by applicants in Egypt for short stay visas was adopted and published in spring 2023<sup>6</sup>. In general, there are some challenges in Egypt assessing the supporting documents when processing a visa application. Egypt is a cash-based society, which makes it difficult to determine the real wealth of a person. Moreover, EgyptAir – the main airline of Egypt – has a policy of pay-later and then automatically cancelling unpaid tickets after 48 hours. Forgery of accommodation and flight tickets by travel agents is a common phenomenon. However, there has not been any serious consideration for amending the existing list in 2025.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code (‘MEV cascades’)**

Egypt knows a harmonised cascade system where the issuing of multiple entry visas with a long validity to regular travellers with a positive visa history increases gradually from 1 to 5 years. Embassies and Consulates implement the general rules by visa code, taking account of local circumstances and “offer more (or less) generous “cascades” for all or certain categories of the applicants”. Sometimes applicant’s their circumstances can change (for example when they used to be a spouse of a citizen and now no longer are), and then some might move away from the cascade.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

The LSC group in Egypt is quite active. Regularly, individual states initiate topics for the agenda of the meetings with the goal of harmonisation of practices, in 2025 for example on child abduction cases. Besides the meetings, the LSC group regularly consult each other through a Signal group when they face a specific issue and wonder how other states deal with this. There is a common understanding that harmonisation of practices and a shared approach to common challenges is to be sought. However, it can be a challenge to agree on the exact approach to take. Sometimes because of difference in national positions, but also because of difference in available staff to carry out tasks.

---

<sup>6</sup> [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-05/C-2023-2743\\_en.PDF](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-05/C-2023-2743_en.PDF)  
[https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-05/C-2023-2743-annex\\_en.PDF](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-05/C-2023-2743-annex_en.PDF)

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

In 2025, Schengen member states collectively processed a total of 38,869 visa applications across various countries. Notably, Q2 (April to June) emerged as a key period, with significant activity observed in many states, reflecting seasonal demands and strategic efforts to manage visa processing effectively.

The refusal rates varied significantly across these states; Czechia maintained a low refusal rate of 10.3%, while Lithuania experienced a high refusal rate, peaking at 76% in Q4. The Netherlands reported an overall refusal rate of 41.7%.

Travel medical insurance (TMI) was not discussed too extensively in 2025. There are a number of well-known websites that make it easy for Schengen states to verify the proof of insurance.

In general, cooperation with local authorities can be challenging in Egypt. The 2025 LSC discussed cooperation with Egyptian prosecution in cases of detected fraud, where the Egyptian prosecution office did not react to such cases if reported. Some states cooperate with the Administrative Control Authority (ACA) that does not need instruction from the prosecution office. In Egypt, a problem across the board is also that banks do not give feedback to verify bank statements. Only colleagues with personal contacts in banks are able to verify bank statements.

## **4. Challenges**

Subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2026)

- Tackling visa shopping;
- Migration risks, in cases where applications check-out and cases where they do not;
- Suspicious applications with references to EU-funded projects;

Cooperation with Egyptian authorities regarding forged documents and suspicion of criminal activity.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO ETHIOPIA

May 2026

## LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN ADDIS ABEBA, ETHIOPIA

### 2025 REPORT

#### 1. Introduction

Twenty-one (21) Member States as well as NO and CH are present and represented in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia. No Member States are present/represented outside the capital.

#### 2. LSC meetings held in 2025

Regular monthly meetings were held (largely on a monthly basis). These are well attended. EU Delegation and Presidency chaired/co-chaired. No ad hoc meetings were organised. Reports of meetings were prepared by the EU Delegation.

#### 3. State of play

##### 3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS and EUD are fully prepared to ensure the tasks to be carried out in LSC under the Visa Code. Issues discussed at LSC meetings include visa statistics (also refusal rates), Art. 25a measures (and implementation thereof), fraud.

##### 3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

In late 2025, MS present (+ CH and NO) reviewed the 2017 list of supporting documents. These were subsequently amended. The Visa Committee of 26 March delivered a positive opinion by consensus. Adoption procedure by COM is on-going.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

No specific cascade has been adopted for Ethiopia. This was not relevant for Ethiopia as long as Article 25 a measures were in effect. These are now being lifted. CH proposed a schedule for cascade, based on visa code default, at LSC meeting of April 2026. Decision expected at May meeting.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Discussions on detailed aspects of harmonisation (e.g. retention of passports during application period) continue.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Describe the exchange of information within the LSC:

- quarterly statistics; MS (+CH and NO) consider that this exchange takes place via HQ systems. Local exchange is co-ordinated By PL.
- MS (+CH and NO) exchange ad hoc on cases of fraud;
- any problems linked to the implementation of the TMI rules; no
- cooperation with local authorities and companies (e.g. banks, employers, transport companies) is regularly discussed
- cooperation with external service providers and monitoring (including initiatives on common monitoring exercises); discussed occasionally
- use of VISMail and the Visa Information System; discussed occasionally

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

N/A

## **4. Challenges**

Non-responsive local authorities.

Ramifications of Art. 25 a. However, on 18 May 2026, Council decided to lift these measures. Expected effect of decision is 19 or 20 May 2026.

## **5. Other issues**

N/A



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) TBILISI, GEORGIA**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

18 MS (Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden) are present in Georgia and 9 MS (Belgium, Cyprus, Croatia, Finland, Ireland, Luxemburg, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia) are represented from abroad. Norway and Switzerland are also represented in Georgia.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

The LSC held four different meetings (February, May, September and December), all well attended by a majority of MS present in Georgia, including Norway and Switzerland. All meetings were chaired by the EUDEL, and minutes of the meetings were distributed to all MS.

**3. State of play**

**3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Given that, Georgian nationals are not subjected to the Visa Code, its application is mainly focused on third-country nationals residing in Georgia.

The group discussed in several occasions the Council decision of 27 January 2025, partially suspending the EU-Georgia Visa Facilitation Agreement, its implementing guidelines and the practical arrangements for its application, as well as the additional individual travel bans that are imposed by some MS. The group was also briefed about exchanges of letters between Commission DG HOME and the Georgian authorities regarding the implementation of the recommendations proposed in the 2024 Visa Suspension Mechanism Report, related to EU concerns on fundamental rights and the repressive legislation, and Georgia's reply portraying these issues as a sovereign internal policy matters outside the scope of the Visa Liberalization regime.

MS exchanged views and best practices in relation to visa applications from Russian and Belarusian nationals, specifically focusing on the required documents for humanitarian visas.

## **b. Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The implementation of the Articles 6 and 7 of the Visa Code still requires special attention. Some MS accept applications from third country nationals who are legally residing in Georgia solely on the basis of an issued permanent or temporary residence permit by the Georgian authorities. Other MS do not request the residence permit but accept applications from third country nationals based on entry and exit stamp in their passports, assessing that the applicant has been in the country for more than 6 months. As per articles 14 and 48 of the Visa Code, a proposal was tabled to amend the harmonised list of supporting documents to be submitted by applications for short stay visas in Georgia.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

Article 24 is implemented, however the issuance rate of MEV varies significantly between MS.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

The LSC regularly discussed and exchanged best practices, including screening insurance requirement for visa applications. Most MS do not accept insurance documents from Russian companies (noting that some are sanctioned) but require instead Georgian or European insurance coverage. MS also exchanged on accommodation and financial requirements.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

The group exchanged information regarding the following topics:

- Fraudulent marriages, used by third country nationals seeking family reunification. MS frequently receive visa applications from third-country nationals seeking (tourist) visas to a MS other than the MS of their EU partner. This practice raises concerns, as Georgia's comparatively lax documentation requirements for marriage registration, relative to EU standards, have made it a hub for fraudulent marriages. Consequently, these particular visa applications are viewed with suspicion and undergo rigorous scrutiny.
- Family members of EU citizens, applying for (tourist) visa to a MS other than the MS of their partner.
- Visa statistics, including the number of visa applications by nationality.
- Surrogacy, becoming a problem in Georgia due to its lax legislation, highlighting potential criminal implications, particularly concerning human trafficking. Georgia permits surrogacy arrangements for individuals of any age or nationality, including non-Georgian couples and surrogate mothers. The framework allows for commercial surrogacy, leading to a growing commercialisation. Documented cases exist of women trafficked to Georgia for surrogacy; however, there are no such cases involving children.

- Cases of document fraud, fraudulent visa facilitation schemes and irregularities in the visa appointments systems.
- Increase of humanitarian visa requests from members of the LGBTQ community.
- The situation of Human Rights Defenders and CSOs in Georgia in relation to political prosecution, and possible increase of short stay extensions on humanitarian grounds, based on the revised EU visa code handbook.
- Guidelines on issuance of visas to RU nationals after the suspension of the Visa Facilitation Agreement with Russia.

#### **4. Challenges**

During 2026 the most likely challenges are the following:

- The partial suspension of the EU-Georgia Visa Facilitation Agreement for Diplomatic and Service Passports, and the contacts between the EU and Georgia to promote the implementation of the recommendations contained in the 2024 and 2025 Visa Suspension Mechanism reports.
- Implementation of EES and ETIAS.
- Georgia was included in the EU-list of safe countries of origin, but with growing repression, deteriorating human rights and democracy situation in Georgia may pose problems if CSO/media others decide to leave and claim asylum in EU.

This report has been approved by the members of the Local Schengen Cooperation group in Georgia.



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN GHANA  
2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

Ten (10) EU Member States are present in Ghana (AT, CZ, DE, DK, ES, FR, HU, IT, MT, NL). 12 are accredited from abroad, but represented by residing MS in Accra (BE, EE, EL, FI, LV, LT, LU, MC, PL, PT, RO, SK). Several EUMS are represented by Honorary Consuls and/or do not have specific agreements with residing MS. Another Schengen partners present in Ghana are Switzerland. Norway moved its consular presence covering Ghana to Kenya in 2025.

There are no LSC members based outside of Accra, apart from IT and HU honorary consulates in Kumasi. Some members also issue visas in Accra for residents of neighbouring countries (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Togo, among others).

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

Four LSC meetings were held in 2025, hosted by NO, EU, MT and HU. All were conducted with physical presence and consistently well-attended by most LSC partners. Meetings were chaired by the EUDEL. The involvement of LSC members in shaping the agenda, and drafting minutes, reduced compared to 2024. We enjoy active participation in all LSC meetings by the EU Return Liaison Officer, housed at the Embassy of Norway. Ad hoc meetings were organised on the roll-out of new chip-embedded passports, document fraud, and the role of the EURLO.

**3. State of play**

**3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Members are well-equipped, and rapid information exchange is possible through an up-to-date LSC contact list. Most members do not face significant challenges relating to the implementation of the Visa Code. Some operate with longer visa handling times, especially during the summer period (up to three months), although they are actively working towards compliance with the 15-days timeframe. Most MS use an external service provider (VFS, BLS). Those who do not generally manage to meet deadlines.

**There have not been any issues with the acceptance of EU Emergency travel Documents (ETDs) in Ghana. 2 ETDs have been issued, one by IT, and one by ES. 7 MS (DE, FR, HU, MT, DK, AT, CZ) have not yet issued any ETD; NL has not yet received the ETDs.**

### 3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

A harmonised list of supporting documents has been in place since 2019. MS expressed an interest in adding travel insurance companies to the existing list, and in updating the list of providers in 2026.

### 3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')

January 2023, LSC members proposed a modification of the visa cascade system (as stipulated under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code), envisioning a 5-step system with smaller jumps: 1-2-3-4-5. The proposal implied stricter measures due to the local context (with high levels of document forgery), compared to the 3-step cascade prescribed by the existing Visa Code.

The Commission presented the LSC proposal to the Visa Committee late 2023. In turn, the Committee suggested to eliminate the final two steps from the proposed five-step cascade, leading us to a 1-2-3 model instead. LSC members discussed the counter-proposal on 8 February 2024, and the group unanimously agreed with the 3-step proposition regarding the new decision as a general guideline.

**The revised 3-step cascade functions well and is routinely applied by most member states in 2025, while space remains for exceptions at the discretion of MS.**

### 3.4 Harmonisation of practices

List of verified insurance providers was updated in 2024, through coordinated effort led by CH.

### 3.5 Exchange of information

- *Bi-monthly Statistics*: As a standing agenda item, LSC members exchange data on refusal rates, waiting times, etc. **Average refusal rate across member states is approximately 50%.**
- *Cases of fraud*: Members frequently receive fraudulent documents as part of visa applications, including student transcripts, birth certificates, marriage certificates and bank statements. Some MS lack ability to detect fraudulent passports and birth/marriage certificates. MFA and the Ghana Police Service urges MS to report cases of fraud.
- *Travel medical insurance (TMI) (i.e. insurance companies offering adequate TMI)*: The list of credible travel medical insurance companies for Schengen was updated by CH, and validated in April 2024. MS welcome a revised update in 2026.
- *LSC members do not experience problems linked to the implementation of the TMI rules.*

- *Cooperation with local authorities* is mainly limited to Birth and Death Registry (BDR) and Marriage Registry. The LSC group welcomed the **Director of Passports at Ministry of Foreign Affairs** to discuss the ongoing migration to chip-embedded passports, featuring over 100 security features, up from 37. LSC members also invited the **Director for Documentation and Visa Fraud at the Ghana Police Service**. This year, the unit has handled 400 visa and document fraud cases. Only 4 cases are in currently in Court. Prosecutions are rare as suspects are often abroad, gone into hiding, or have reached a settlement with the victim. Access to Consular Director at MFA has improved in 2025.
- *Cooperation with external service providers and monitoring (including initiatives on common monitoring exercises)*: Most LSC members use VFS as external service provider, with the exception of DE and HU. Some MS cooperate with law firms to verify documents (DE and CH). Member States found some weaknesses in the appointment booking system that needed to be addressed, as appointments were blocked very rapidly. In a newspaper article (10 February 2026) VFS Global warned about visa appointment fraud, in particular scammers falsely offering early booking slots for a fee.
- *Use of VISMail and the Visa Information System*: Used by all MS. CH, CZ, DE, DK, ES, FR, HU, IT, MT, NL and NO are using VISMail.

### 3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Occasional **training opportunities** have been organised for the LSC group. At the invitation of FR, a training took place on fraud verification.

## 4. Challenges

Challenges faced in 2025 revolved around:

- **Visa shopping**, and the involvement of “middlemen” (re-)selling slots, remains an endemic challenge. Member state suspicion is driven by high frequency of no-shows for visa appointments, with a noticeable uptick in Q4, and the speed through which newly opened appointment slots are filled (within the hour). Member States exchanged positive experiences about new defences against blocking appointments (facial recognition for visa applicants, email verification, appointment confirmation, uploading of background document).
- **Fraudulent documents** are routinely used in visa applications (bank statements, birth certificates, employers’ letters of introduction, salary slips, etc.). Spotting forged legalizations is deemed particularly challenging.
- **Limited Capacity to Prosecute Fraud**: An exchange with the Director for Documentation and Visa Fraud at the Ghana Police Service clarified the near-absent capacity to investigate and prosecute document fraud cases. Interest in (joint) communication or dialogue with Ghanaian authorities about fraud levels.

- **Returnees:** The EURLO made progress in harnessing local authority access and support. Specific Ministries and Bureaus remain unresponsive, or apply a transactional approach. ID verification, access to Birth and Deaths Registry (BDR) remains a challenge. Several travel document requests, and ID requests, have been processed with BDR. A considerable number of EURLO requests (at least 40) remain pending.
- **VIP visa processing** requests: Member states noted the increasingly assertive requests for last-minute “VIP visa handling” by officials. Between Mid-November and mid-December, Schengen countries represented in Ghana received 34 separate requests, for over 60 visa to be processed at short notice, outside, the formal procedures. In most cases, the requests are honoured and processed within 7 days.
- Since the start of the new administration, **MFA has become vocal about the “maltreatment of visa applicants.”**



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN GUATEMALA**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

Five EU Member States (ES, DE, FR, IT, SE) are represented through an Embassy in Guatemala City. 15 MS have a non-resident Ambassador who is accredited to Guatemala (a large majority is based in Mexico-City). 18 non-represented MS have an honorary consul in Guatemala.

Outside the capital, ES and IT have honorary consuls in Quetzaltenango.

ES issues Schengen visas for BE, EE, EL, FR, LU, HU, MT, NL, PT and FI; SE for DK, LT, IS and NO; IT for SI; CH for LI.

Guatemalan citizens benefit from a visa waiver.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

In 2025, LSC in Guatemala held four regular meetings (April, June, September and December). Attendance was generally good. All meetings were chaired by EUDEL, which also drafted the meeting reports and coordinated follow-up. There are no LSC meetings outside the capital. In addition to regular meetings, an *ad hoc* LSC meeting was organised in June 2025, jointly with EUDEL Mexico, focusing on visa policy for Belizean nationals.

**3. State of play**

**3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

No specific problems discussed during the LSC meetings.

**3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

Harmonisation practices are already acquired. Given that Guatemalan passport holders can visit the Schengen Area for up to 90 days without a visa, the number of Schengen visas issued in Guatemala is very small and applies only to nationals of third countries. In general, applicants comply with the requirements and present the documents correctly. MS do not consider it necessary to amend the existing list of documents to be presented in.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

The cascade has not been adopted in Guatemala. There are no security or migration risks that would justify the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants. Article 24(2) of the Visa Code applies normally when applicants meet the integrity and reliability requirements set out in that article.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

None

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Information exchange among MS was regular. The sharing of quarterly statistics was addressed, with EUDEL recalling reporting requirements. Cases of fraud were not identified as a significant issue.

EUDEL regularly briefed Member States on the evolving ETIAS timeline, facilitated exchanges on likely information gaps among travellers, and proposed joint outreach activities targeting key stakeholders. It was agreed that, once implementation dates are confirmed, coordinated engagement with government authorities, travel agencies, airlines and the media would be essential to prevent misinformation and ensure preparedness. Concrete follow-up included the agreement to organise joint consular outreach activities, notably a joint media briefing scheduled for early 2026.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

Joint Guatemala/Mexico LSC proposal for more generous rules on the issuing of multiple-entry visas with long validity for Belizean visa applicants.

## **4. Challenges**

The challenge identified in the 2024 report regarding the need for local communication ahead of ETIAS implementation was addressed in 2025 through outreach to the media. Further communication/outreach activities are foreseen for 2026.

## **5. Other issues**

None

April 2026



## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN HONG KONG AND MACAO**

### **2025 REPORT**

#### **1. Introduction**

13 Members States of Schengen are present in the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of Hong Kong (AT-BE-CZ-DE-ES-FR-HU-IT-FI-NL-PL-SE-CH). EL left Hong Kong in 2023. One Schengen member is present in the Macao SAR (PT). DK and EL are represented in Guangzhou, other MS in Beijing.

#### **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

Four meetings held (24 January, 19 June, 27 September, 27 November). All EUMS present in Hong Kong and CH attended meetings regularly.

Meetings were chaired by the EU Deputy Head of Office. PL (EU Council Presidency in first half of 2026) co-chaired the meetings, DK (second half of the year) does not have a resident full-time representative in HK.

Reports were drawn up by the EU Office and sent for approval/comments to the MS. There is no coordination with those MS that are not present in HK and Macao, as this falls outside of the scope of the EU Office.

#### **3. State of play**

##### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Demand has reached pre-pandemic levels. Many MS are working at full capacity. MS reported increased waiting times of up to four weeks during peak seasons. MS reported cases of visa shopping.

##### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

*For the locations where work on this has been completed:*

In general, MS present consider that harmonisation of practices has been completed but would welcome common practice on the matter of Schengen visas for domestic helpers. MS have compiled an overview detailing the varying practices with Schengen visas for domestic helpers.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

This rule is applied.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

- Domestic Helper Visa Policies: MS reported incidents of employers pressuring helpers to travel under tourist visas while continuing to work during travels to the Schengen area. Some MS refused visas citing application "did not justify purpose." No reports about legal challenges from employers. EUO continued to encourage harmonisation.
- AI in Visa Processing: Several MS are exploring AI tools, but no shared guidelines. EUO encourages exchange.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

- Quarterly statistics show that visa delivery has recovered to pre-pandemic levels.
- Cases of fraud remain exceptional, as HK residents do not need a visa to access the Schengen area. Nevertheless, MS reported about cases of fraudulent agencies selling queue spots.
- MS reported issues regarding:
  - Overbooking by visa agencies overburdening reservation systems
  - Rise in fake applications and last-minute cancellations, a high number of no-shows affecting appointment availability
  - Cases of visa shopping
  - Applications for tourist visas by domestic helpers.
- No problems linked to the implementation of TMI rules reported.
- 50% of MS use external visa service providers.
- Most MS use VISMail and the Visa Information System.

#### **a. Any other initiative taken in LSC**

ETIAS/EES preparation:

- In 2024, EUO and MS had jointly reached out to Hong Kong authorities and the public to prepare for the establishment of the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS). Due to the postponed roll-out of the systems, public outreach in 2025 focussed on the introduction of EES.

- The impending introduction of EES/ETIAS raised concerns with Hong Kong individuals released from prison after prosecution related to national security about potential travel restrictions arising from the systems. EUO raised awareness among MS.

#### **4. Challenges**

Regulations on how to deal with visa applications from migrant domestic workers (MDW) accompanying their employers to Europe for holidays continue to vary among MS. The issue has raised concerns about compliance with labour laws in Europe. In previous reports it was noted that MS have called for a universal approach to this issue. In 2025, MS have compiled and shared an overview detailing the varying practices with Schengen visas for domestic helpers. Harmonisation, however, remains to be addressed in 2026.

#### **5. Other issues**

N/A



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO INDIA

## LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN INDIA

### 2025 REPORT

#### 1. Introduction

27 Member States (MSs) are present and one (LI) is represented in India. Three non-EU Schengen States (NO, CH, IS) are present too. One perspective member (CY) is also represented in Delhi. In addition, several MSs have additional consulates processing Schengen visas: nine in Mumbai (BE, CZ, DE, ES, FR, HU, IT, NL PL), two in Kolkata (FR, IT), two in Bengaluru (FR, NL, IT), one in Chennai (FR - under the Bureau of France but depending on the Consulate General in Pondicherry - ) and one in Goa (PT).

All MSs, but RO, outsource non-judgemental tasks to an external service provider (ESP). With the exception of ES, EL and SK (as of late 2023), they all use the same ESP.

Several MSs' representations in India have also the jurisdiction to process Schengen visa requests of applicants from neighbouring countries (NP, BT, LK, MV, BD, AF, MY, MM, SG).

#### 2. LSC meetings held in 2025

Six regular LSC meetings were held in 2025, with an average representation of **more than 20 MS**. All were held in person in the premises of the EU Delegation. Meeting reports as well as the annual report were drafted by EUDEL.

Airport Liaisons Officers (ALOs - seven posted in Delhi, three in Mumbai, and two abroad – FI and NL) are systematically invited and represented at the LSC meetings. IE didn't attend any LSC meeting in 2025 but attended the migration-related EU MS coordination meeting.

The annual ALOs training was organised between 24 February and 3 March 2025 in the premises of the Polish Embassy in New Delhi. More than 100 visa officers undertook the training during the five training days.

In addition, EUDEL together with Frontex organised an in person training on document security in October 2025. Up to 60 people attended the three day training hosted in the premises of the Czech Embassy in New Delhi.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

EUDEL and MSs actively engaged and cooperated on the tasks defined by Article 48 of the Visa Code, mainly during regular meetings. The LSC Signal group proved to be a useful tool for ad hoc exchanges.

The discussion on migratory risk does not only take place in the LSC, but also in a Local Migration Group, which met two times last year, in particular to gather information and prepare a EU-India High Level Dialogue on Migration and Mobility.

The main problem related to the implementation of the Visa Code discussed in LSC meetings remains the same as over the past year, namely observation of the visa processing time and MSs competent for processing visas. The high amount of visa requests continued to put pressure on most consulates, and some still kept limits (caps) in the applications. Consequently, Indians wishing to travel either could not apply for visa to some MSs, or faced waiting time of several weeks. Visa shopping also remained a phenomenon in 2025, though to a lesser extent than in 2024. The extended delays for applications for travel to some of the main destination MSs continued to have spill-over effects to other MSs, with Indian travellers trying to find alternate ways to enter Schengen MSs. The application of the rule of MS competent for visa processing -main destination- continued to represent one of the challenges in terms of application of the Visa Code in 2024. Several MSs admitted issuing uniform visas to travellers of good profile (or with previous history of Schengen travel), even if “visa shopping” could be suspected.

Second persistent challenge for the human resources of the MS remains the high volume of fake and fraudulent documents submitted as part of visa applications. According to several MS local tour operators, travel agencies, educational consultants (for student visas) and other third parties are mainly responsible for submitting fake documents.

The harmonised list of supporting documents was revised with the procedure formalised in summer 2025.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

In 2024, the LSC agreed on the need to revise the harmonised list (following its last revision in 2020) especially in view of introducing a cover letter and business bank statements. The proposal was finalised in the LSC in early 2025, later accepted by the Visa Committee with the Decision adopted in summer 2025.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

The LSC proposal for the general Cascade was adopted and the procedure was finalised in April 2024.

No cascade for a particular group of travellers (e.g. seafarers) exists in place, but there is general understanding that Schengen States concerned by seafarers are more favourable in practice even without formalisation of the cascade.

Given that Schengen States do not collect particular data on number of visa issued under the cascade regime there is no particular information to which extend the cascade adoption impacted/increased the issuance of MEVs for Indian nationals.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

The issue of possible harmonisation of visa fees in local currency was not rediscussed again after the LSC concluded in 2024 that given different practices this is not feasible in short/long term.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

#### Quarterly statistics:

A uniform template is in place, also including optional features for reporting processing of national visas (having for some a huge impact on the overall visa processing capacity). This section is largely filled also by the MSs when they share their data.

Despite discussion at LSC meetings and regular reminder of the obligation to report, majority of the 40 visa sections in India reported no quarterly statistics or reported only for one or two quarters. Partially this was also linked with the issues of accessing AGORA. To overcome the issues with Agora access CH offered to act as a contact point for statistics collection and consolidate the information.

#### Cases of fraud

As explained above, fraudulent practices linked to visa applications - both Schengen and national visas (students in particular) - continued to be reported by MSs. This was discussed during several LSC meetings. The main challenge remains how to address this continuous trend, and in particular the follow-up to be given to individual cases of forged or fake official documents.

### Travel medical insurance (TMI):

The system in place in India for verification of TMI (through a website managed by the General Insurance Council (GIC)), allowing verification of authenticity of individual contracts works well. One MS (DK) has volunteered to be the contact point of the GIC for solving issues.

### Cooperation with local authorities and companies (banks, employers, transport companies):

Exchange of information and experience on those took place in the LSC meetings but also thanks to the ALOs, who also share their expertise and knowledge on ad-hoc basis, upon request from individual visa sections.

### Cooperation with external service providers and monitoring (including initiatives on common monitoring exercises).

With all MS but three (SK, ES, EL) using the same ESP, there is a lot of opportunity for cooperation, and this has been discussed extensively within the LSC. Upon initiative of CH, CH, AT and LU have started common inspections of the ESP centers that they have in common. Also, the Nordic countries (DK, FI, IS, NO, SE) have entered into an agreement from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 onwards, that the audits/inspections of the common ESPs will be shared. There was no follow up on the working group on cooperation with VFS (MT, PT, IE, NL, PL) set up in 2023. The Schengen States started exchanging views also on premium services offered by ESP which largely varies from State to State.

### Use of VISMail and the Visa Information System;

This topic was briefly touched upon at one of the meetings (in relation to the need to revise the harmonised list of supporting documents and eventually add old Schengen visa that are not available in VIS) but was not discussed in detail in 2025.

## **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

The EU DEL organised as part of the EU-funded project on migration and mobility a dedicated workshop on student mobility (with focus on educational consultants) in November 2025, touching also upon issues related to document fraud. Several Schengen States participated and shared their experience. A roundtable on visa processing in presence of Ministry of External Affairs was organised under the project in February 2025 but didn't bring any substantial discussion or progress in addressing the issues.

#### **4. Challenges**

*Response to the challenges identified in the 2024 report*

The harmonised list of supporting documents was adopted in summer 2025.

Several exchanges on fraudulent documents took place throughout 2025 however without a clear outline how to solve the issue other than reinforce the internal capacities of visa officials by providing more in-house trainings.

*Subject to be addressed in the next reporting period:*

In addition, the following subjects still need to be addressed:

- Continue exchange on ways to deal with forged and fake documents, spurious agents and traffickers, sharing information and encouraging legal actions.
- Exchange on the implementation of the MEV cascade for bonafide travellers and overall on the processing capacity of the Schengen States
- Engaging with MHA/Indian Police regarding appointment of a single point of contact at federal level regarding fraudulent documents (for transmission of information, denunciation of fraud, trafficking in human beings or migrant smuggling)

#### **5. Other issues**

The issue of Schengen visa processing capacity cannot be treated independently from the capacity of national visa requests. Most MS also face a very significant increase of visa requests both for studies, and for work. In most cases, these are processed by the same teams in the consulates. Although these topics are outside the Visa Code remit, there is also an interest from MS of sharing experience in such fields.

*The report has been approved by all Member States present.*



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN INDONESIA**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

22 EU Member States (MS) have an embassy in Jakarta. This includes countries that are not part of Schengen (CY, IE). Schengen countries Norway and Switzerland are represented in Jakarta. Some regionalised the processing of Schengen visas: for Sweden and Norway all applications from Indonesia are handled in Bangkok, including visa issuing; all visa decisions for the Netherlands are taken centrally in The Hague.

*Several embassies issue Schengen visas on behalf of other Schengen countries under bilateral arrangements:* Austria for Malta and Slovenia, Denmark for Iceland, Finland for Estonia, Germany for Latvia, Hungary for Lithuania, and the Netherlands for Belgium and Luxemburg.

Several Schengen countries use external service providers for collecting applications. Some MS collect visa applications in Bali and/or Surabaya for processing in Jakarta.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

There were 6 well attended meetings held in 2025, chaired by the EU delegation (EUDEL). The secretariat was held by the EUDEL. The EUDEL collects input for the agenda with participating countries and sends out the agenda, and drafts the meeting minutes after each meeting, which are sent out to member states and to EU Headquarters (EEAS and DG HOME). EUDEL maintained contact with like-minded countries. Some MS also organised networking activities for EU and like-minded countries' colleagues.

Colleagues from the UK joined one of the meetings. The EUDEL Consular Correspondent has conducted courtesy meetings with all 5 EU Consular Partner countries: Australia, Canada, Norway, the US and the UK.

MS not present in Jakarta are usually invited to join LSC meetings via webex link.

### 3. State of play

#### 3.1 Application of the Visa Code

*Describe MS and EUD's preparedness to ensure the tasks to be carried out in LSC under the Visa Code.*

*Describe specific problems relating to the implementation of the Visa Code as discussed in the LSC meetings, in particular related to waiting times for appointments, cooperation with external service providers, and visa shopping.*

Good cooperation was ensured via the LSC meetings and communication with an ad-hoc LSC-Consular WhatsApp group and by a signal group.

Schengen Member States and the EUDEL worked well together on fulfilling the Visa Code requirements. Besides LSC meetings, Schengen Consuls used the LSC mailing list and WA and signal group to exchange information, questions, answers and experiences on Schengen/Visa related issues.

The single biggest issue is the processing times of the visas (particularly for certain Schengen Member States) due to high volume of the applications and limited capacity to accommodate appointments and visa-processing.

#### 3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

***For the locations where work on this has not been completed [~~delete the option that is not relevant~~]:***

*Briefly describe the state of affairs:*

- *MS present consider that harmonisation of practices is already acquired*
- *work is on-going (describe progress/obstacles)*
- *a draft list has been agreed upon and forwarded to the Visa Committee*

***For the locations where work on this has been completed:***

*Describe the **monitoring of MS' implementation** of the Commission Implementing Decision on the list of documents to be presented in [...] and indicate whether there is a need to amend the existing list.*

Overall, LSC meetings serve as a forum to discuss the harmonisation of practices across a range of topics, including the financial capacity of applicants, passport borrowing, and other documentation-

related issues. One issue repeatedly raised in LSC meetings is the practice of passport borrowing, which could be considered for further harmonisation.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

*For the locations where a specific cascade has not been adopted:*

*Briefly describe MS' implementation of the 'default' cascade of Article 24(2) of the Visa Code. Please also describe the situation regarding the assessment of migration and security risks to be carried out under Article 24(2b) of the Visa Code.*

*For the locations where a specific cascade is in force:*

*Describe MS' implementation of the Commission Implementing Decision on the specific rules on issuing multiple-entry visas.*

Indonesia joined the visa-cascade regime only in July 2025. Therefore, there is still relatively limited information on the MS' implementation, with one issue that persists is the hesitation of some consuls to grant a five-year multiple-entry visa. Instead, for the second visa application they sometimes continue to issue again a single-entry visa (which decision remains at their discretion).

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

*Provide information on other initiatives taken to ensure harmonisation of practices.*

No local coordination on the regular adjustment of **exchange rates** for Schengen visas fees

No harmonised list of **accredited travel agencies** adopted in terms of the LSC and is not envisaged in 2026 either.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

*Describe the exchange of information within the LSC:*

- *quarterly statistics;*

Member States are requested to share visa statistics, which are compiled by the EUDEL.

*[short description of quality of exchange/trends observed; do not add tables or annexes of statistics]*

- *cases of fraud;*

Member states exchange on fraud cases and forged documents during the LSC meetings. MS also shared names of blacklisted companies via the LSC mailing list.

- *travel medical insurance (TMI) (i.e. insurance companies offering adequate TMI);*

Coordination on **travel insurances requirements has continued**, with the EUDEL updating a list of insurance companies compliant with Article 15 of the Visa Code. The list was shared for comments/approval to the Schengen countries present in Indonesia. A final list was shared with the Consuls to be made available for information to visa applicants in the Schengen Consulates. Proposal for 2026 is to have Member States' lead this exercise.

- *cooperation with external service providers and monitoring*

Information is exchanged during LSC meetings

- *use of VISMail and the Visa Information System;*

Most use VISMail to exchange information. Some countries still encounter problems using the VIS.

- *other issues.*

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

*Briefly describe such initiatives (background-results achieved).*

Not applicable

## **4. Challenges**

*Describe the response to challenges, if any, that were listed in the 2024 report.*

*Describe subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2026).*

As mentioned in previous years' reports, there is limited staff capacity in the EU Delegation to carry out LSC effectively (one EEAS Official in charge as part of many other duties). Communication from/with HQ and close local cooperation with the Schengen Consuls helps mitigating this challenge.

## **5. Other issues**

*Present any other subject of relevance to the LSC.*



**DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF IRAQ**

30/06/2026

## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN IRAQ 2025 REPORT**

### **1. Introduction**

Fifteen Schengen Member States are present in Baghdad, out of which nine (DE, CZ, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, NL, RO) have a consulate and issue visas. In addition, ten Schengen Member States (BG, CZ, DE, EL, FR, HU, IT, NL, PL, RO) have a consulate in Erbil (Kurdistan Region in Iraq). Three non-resident Schengen countries (AT, BE, NO) have their consulates covering Iraq in Amman (Jordan), one (DK) in Beirut (Lebanon) and one (FI) in Ankara (Turkey).

### **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

LSC meetings had not taken place for years before 2025. Then FR organised an ad hoc consular meeting in Baghdad on 5 June 2025. After the change of management in the EUDEL in September, two LSC meetings were organised on 17 September and 7 December, with regular (quarterly) meetings scheduled for the upcoming year. The first meetings were well attended while the last saw lower participation. The LSC meetings took place in Baghdad and Erbil in parallel, connected via Webex. Non-represented Schengen countries could also connect via Webex.

The EU Local Office in Erbil organised regular local coordination separately as well.

The EUDEL created a Schengen/consular WhatsApp group for easier communication.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1. Application of the Visa Code**

MS are well equipped to properly apply the Visa Code provisions. The main outstanding matter concerns travel medical insurance providers, with different approaches among MS.

External service providers used by MS:

- VFS Global: AT, BG, DE (Erbil only), HU, NL, SE
- TLS: BE, FR
- BLS: ES

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

MS consider the list adopted in 2016 is still adequate. There are, however, frequent problems with fake supporting documents, especially bank statements.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

The group discussed and dismissed the need for adaptation of the MEV cascades.

Due to substantial and sustained progress made by Iraq on readmission cooperation, the European Commission withdrew its proposal for restrictive measures under Article 25a of the Visa Code (published in the Official Journal on 17/11/2025).

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

There were discussions on different acceptance criteria for travel medical insurance among MS. Some MS accept insurances provided by local companies while other MS only accept insurance of companies established or operating in the EU (who are therefore liable to pay the required expenses). Efforts to agree on a common approach continue in 2026.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

The establishment of the WhatsApp group was appreciated by MS and increasingly used for information sharing and intelligence gathering. The EUDEL started compiling visa statistics from MS.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

Following requests from Iraqi human rights defenders, the EUD informed the group about the different flexibilities offered by the Visa Code to accommodate the specific needs and challenges of HRDs.

## **4. Challenges**

After years without consular coordination in Iraq, the team spirit and reflex of sharing needs to be gradually strengthened in the group.

## **5. Other issues**

N/A



**DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**  
**TO THE STATE OF ISRAEL**

13/01/2026

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN ISRAEL**  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2025**

**1. Introduction**

The Local Schengen Cooperation (LSC) covered by the EU Delegation in Tel Aviv (EUDEL) applies to the internationally recognised territory of Israel and is performed by the EU Local Consular Correspondent (Political Officer) together with the Schengen MS consuls accredited to Israel. LSC in Tel Aviv does not cover the occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, where most of the MS have their own consulates located in East Jerusalem or Ramallah. Some MS (AT, CZ, EE, FI, LT, SK) cover the abovementioned areas from their embassies in Tel Aviv. Visas are issued in the Consular Sections of the Schengen MS in their embassies located in Tel Aviv. IS and LU don't have their own embassies/consular sections in Tel Aviv. IS is thus represented by DK and LU is represented by BE. From 1 May 2023 DK represents Norway in Israel (Tel Aviv) in issuing C-visas, as well as residence cases.

Israeli citizens, holders of ordinary passports, are not required to be in possession of a visa when entering the Schengen area for less than 90 days. LSC Tel Aviv therefore essentially covers the cases of non-Israeli citizens who are residents in Israel. Nationals from the occupied Palestinian territories are subjected to visa requirements, but they usually apply for visa in the consulates located in East Jerusalem or Ramallah (see also point 4).

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

In 2025 EUDEL organised 4 LSC meetings in its premises (they were held back-to-back with the LCC meetings). Among the topic discussed were such issues as family re-unification visas, cases of visa shopping, different practices related to the granting of Schengen visa observed among the MS, Schengen visa applications for Russian citizens residing in Israel, as well as challenges of issuing visas to the Palestinian people by consuls residing in Tel Aviv. All LSC meetings were met with a high interest by the Schengen/MS with almost all of them being present in each of the meetings.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

MS are already applying the rules of the Revised Visa Code and revised rules since February 2020. No problems have been reported so far.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The Visa Committee has officially approved the Harmonized List of Supporting Documents for Israel. The current list of documents remains valid.

#### **3.3 Adaptation of the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

MS have adapted to the general rules of multiple-entry visas under Article 24 (2). Some MS limited visa operations in mid-June 2025, during the Iranian-Israeli war. However, all MS consulates resumed their regular visa operations shortly after the cease-fire.

#### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

MS have initiated steps to harmonize the list of documents that have to be delivered for a visa application as well as the cascade system.

#### **3.5 Exchange of information**

EUDEL and MS keep regular exchange of information. EUDEL remains in contact with Israeli authorities on a regular basis, especially with the IL MFA Consular & Visa Department, Diplomatic Protocol, Israel's Population and Immigration Authority (PIBA). EUDEL remains in regular contact with the MS consuls also via e-mail list and consular WhatsApp group, which is a daily forum to discuss issues concerning visa and other Schengen topics. All MS present in Tel Aviv recognize Travel Medical Insurances (TMIs) issued by local Israeli companies for the purpose of visa applications. The VIS-Mail system is fully used by MS present.

Current visa statistics were exchanged by the MS on a regular basis and were included into the updated version of the Joint EU Consular Crisis Preparedness Framework.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

EUDEL informed the Israeli MFA about ETIAS system which is due to be implemented in the last quarter of 2026 and will refer to the Israeli citizens. EUDEL prepared an information campaign in Hebrew and Arabic, which will be launched in Israeli media, as well in EUDEL's social media ahead of the implementation of ETIAS.

### **4. Challenges**

One of the main challenges for some MS is attendance of Palestinians (from the occupied Palestinian territories) by some consuls based in Tel Aviv. In practice, a few consuls travel to the oPt to attend Palestinians there, but in some cases, Palestinians might have to visit the consular premises in Tel Aviv. Travelling to the oPt is more complicated for diplomatic staff after the 7 October 2023 attacks (big lines at the checkpoints, some checkpoints being partially closed), while travelling of Palestinians from the oPt to Israel is almost impossible for two years (and it is extremely difficult even for those who have consular appointments in Tel Aviv).

### **5. Other issues**

No other issues to be reported.

*Prepared by: Bartosz Sejbuk, Consular Correspondent, EU Delegation to Israel*



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN**

Astana, 27 February 2026

## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN KAZAKHSTAN**

### **2025 REPORT**

#### **1. Introduction**

22 MS maintain embassies in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, most of which include consular sections. In addition, 5 MS (DE, LT, HU, PL, FR) operate consulates in Almaty. These consulates, as well as many consular sections based in Astana, frequently provide services not only for Kazakhstan but also for neighbouring countries, primarily Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, thereby broadening the range of issues discussed during LSC meetings.

5 MS (DK, IE, LU, MT, SL) are not represented in Kazakhstan. DK, IE, LU and SL represented through their respective embassies in Moscow. Since November 2024, CY has established representation in Kazakhstan through the opening of an embassy. In accordance with the Convention concerning Cooperation in Consular Matters signed in Brussels on 30 September 1965, BE provides consular assistance to Luxembourg citizens in locations where Luxembourg is not represented.

Most embassies and consulates cooperate with officially contracted visa service providers. Several of these providers operate offices beyond Astana and Almaty in order to reduce travel time for applicants residing outside major cities. Due to the vast distances between towns and cities, most applicants are unable to apply for their visa in close proximity to their residency. Severe winter climate conditions further increase the burden on applicants.

Official service providers contracted by MS are responsible for collecting applicants' documentation and forwarding it to the relevant consulates. As of 2025, visa applications in Kazakhstan are processed through the following providers: **VFS Global**, serving 16 MS; **BLS International**, serving 3 MS; and **Visametric**, serving 1 MS.

## **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

During the reporting period, the LSC group held 5 meetings on the following dates: February 19, April 30, June 11, October 22, December 9. One meeting in April were conducted partially with the MFA representative to discuss ongoing visa-facilitation process and combating fraud companies offering guaranteed visas.

The LSC group meetings were very well attended by MS. All LSC meetings were organized in hybrid format (online for MS based in Almaty). During regular meetings, MS and EUDEL exchanged views on visa statistics and trends, developments related to visa facilitation, fraud-related risks and intermediary practices, as well as operational and technical aspects of visa processing.

Reports (summaries) were drawn up by EUDEL, which has also been in charge of reporting and coordinating the follow-up steps when needed.

## **3. State of play**

### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

In Kazakhstan, the Visa Code is well implemented, in a coordinated and synchronised manner. The Code proved its relevance as a single unified legal instrument, helping to address effectively common problems raised in relation to the Schengen visa application process. In Kazakhstan, VIS has successfully been applied since 14 November 2013.

The Kazakh side raised concerns regarding documentation requirements, appointment waiting times and predictability of visa issuance, while MS reiterated the need for full respect of Visa Code provisions and consistent application procedures. Cooperation with the MFA remained constructive, including discussions on fraud prevention and improved public awareness activities.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The harmonised list of supporting documents applicable in Kazakhstan remains in force and continues to be implemented by MS in accordance with the Commission Implementing Decision and the Visa Code.

During the reporting period, EUDEL monitored the practical implementation of the harmonised list and discussed remaining differences in interpretation and application. While the overall framework is considered aligned, MS noted that variations may still arise in procedural formats, such as electronic vs. paper submission requirements or differing verification practices. These differences were assessed as operational rather than structural and do not affect compliance with the agreed list.

Discussions with the Kazakh authorities confirmed continued interest in reviewing certain documentation practices, particularly regarding documents no longer commonly used in Kazakhstan, such as employment record books or certain civil status documents. MS took note of these observations and reiterated that documentation requirements must remain consistent with the Commission Implementing Decision and fraud-prevention needs.

LSC exchanges also addressed the increasing use of digital verification tools in Kazakhstan, including QR-code-based authentication of employment and official documents. MS acknowledged the potential of such tools to facilitate document verification and reduce fraud risks, as well as noting that implementation practices may evolve gradually depending on national procedures.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

According to the Article 24(2) of the Visa Code MS apply the cascade system, and all procedures are in line with the Visa Code.

MS confirmed that the issuance of multiple-entry visas (MEVs) remains fully aligned with the provisions of the Visa Code and is based on individual assessment of applicants, taking into account travel history, compliance with previous visas and overall risk evaluation. LSC discussions reiterated that the cascade mechanism constitutes a possibility rather than an automatic entitlement for applicants. In practice, applicants with positive travel history and established compliance with visa conditions are frequently granted longer-validity visas, commonly up to two years, in line with the gradual approach foreseen under the Visa Code.

During exchanges with the Kazakh authorities, questions were raised regarding the predictability of MEV issuance. MS clarified that decisions remain case-by-case and dependent on the fulfilment of all relevant conditions, including the assessment of migration and security risks under Article 24(2b) of the Visa Code.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

MS exchanged best practices related to the assessment of applications, identification of potential visa shopping cases, and verification of supporting documentation. Particular attention was given to aligning approaches where differing procedural practices could create confusion for applicants, while respecting national competences in visa decision-making.

MS also discussed practical measures to improve transparency and predictability for applicants. Some MS shared experiences of publishing explanatory information on official websites regarding the functioning of the multiple-entry visa cascade system, with the aim of improving public understanding and reducing unrealistic expectations among applicants and this approach was identified as a useful practice that could contribute to greater consistency in communication.

Several MS exchanged experiences regarding technical solutions to prevent misuse of appointment systems, including waitlist mechanisms, monitoring of suspicious bookings and adjustments to slot allocation procedures. These exchanges contributed to greater convergence in approaches addressing appointment slot manipulation.

Finally, MS explored possibilities for coordinated communication initiatives addressing visa procedures and fraud risks, including potential joint information campaigns and closer cooperation with external service providers, which contributed to strengthening a common understanding of challenges and reinforcing coherent practices across MS.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

MS regularly exchanged views on flights, visa policies and travel regulations. MS regularly shared their visa statistics and discussed issues related to visa providers and private tour-companies.

According to the visa statistics received so far from 18 MS, the total **visa issuance rate** for Kazakhstan is **90.91%**. The **visa refusal rate (around 9.1%)** is relatively low compared to some other countries with high refusal rates. Obviously higher number of applications occurs in spring and summer due to tourism and holidays. Lower demand in winter as business travel and family visits dominate.

MS regularly shared cases involving falsified supporting documents, forged invitations and misleading visa intermediaries offering “guaranteed visas.” Discussions also covered emerging fraud patterns identified through online monitoring, including aggressive marketing practices by visa-assistance agencies on social media platforms and the use of questionable supporting documentation obtained through third-party intermediaries. EUDEL coordinated approaches to reporting such cases to Kazakh authorities and agreed to continue proactive information-sharing to identify trends at an early stage.

MS exchanged information regarding travel medical insurance practices, including concerns related to forged or unreliable insurance certificates submitted by applicants. No systemic problems affecting the overall implementation of TMI rules were identified during the reporting period. MS continued monitoring insurance providers to ensure compliance with Schengen requirements.

MS also exchanged information regarding verification mechanisms available through Kazakh digital platforms, including online verification of employment documentation, which may support fraud prevention efforts.

Several MS shared experiences with technical solutions introduced to mitigate appointment system abuse, including waitlist mechanisms, manual monitoring of suspicious bookings and strengthened identity verification procedures. MS also discussed the possibility of coordinated engagement with service providers to address shared concerns more effectively.

MS also exchanged views on visa applications submitted by third-country nationals residing in Kazakhstan, differences in national practices and related operational implications.

LSC MS share the information proactively via e-mail and discuss potential threats and tendencies during the meetings.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

EUDEL coordinated efforts to improve outreach on visa-related matters, including preparation of public information materials explaining the state of play of the VFA process and warning applicants about fraudulent intermediaries offering “guaranteed visas” that aimed to counter disinformation and manage public expectations regarding visa policies.

EUDEL further explored possibilities for strengthened coordination with external service providers, including proposals to organise dedicated meetings with companies (VFS, BLS, Visametric) to address operational challenges and share feedback collectively. MS expressed support for more frequent ad hoc exchanges within the LSC to allow rapid responses to emerging issues. In addition, LSC meetings facilitated information-sharing on upcoming EU initiatives affecting consular work, including preparation for the introduction of the new European Travel Document and updates related to EU border management systems.

## **4. Challenges**

Appointment availability remains largely demand-driven and varies between MS depending on application volumes. Several MS reported that appointment slots are often fully booked shortly after release, raising concerns about automated bookings and the resale of appointment slots by intermediaries. To mitigate these risks, some MS introduced additional technical and procedural safeguards, including waitlist systems, manual monitoring of suspicious bookings and reserved appointment allocations for specific applicant categories. Despite these challenges, MS generally assessed waiting times as manageable within existing legal frameworks.

Cooperation with external service providers remains essential for handling the high volume of applications in Kazakhstan. While cooperation overall functions well, MS repeatedly discussed operational challenges, including allegations of overcharging, insufficient transparency of services offered by intermediaries, and attempts by private agencies to exploit appointment systems.

MS reported cases where applicants apply at one consulate while intending to travel primarily to another Schengen State, therefore creating administrative and credibility challenges. Exchanges of best practices focused on identifying inconsistencies in travel plans and improving coordination among consulates. MS reiterated that issuance of visas, including multiple-entry visas, remains subject to individual assessment under the Visa Code and does not constitute an automatic entitlement.

MS exchanged information on forged supporting documents, misleading visa agencies offering “guaranteed visas,” manipulation of appointment systems and misuse of supporting documentation in specific sectors such as cargo transport applications. EUDEL and MS agreed to continue raising such cases with Kazakh authorities and to strengthen public communication efforts addressing fraud risks.

### **Priorities for 2026**

- continued monitoring of fraud trends and strengthened cooperation with Kazakh authorities on prevention and enforcement;
- follow-up on developments related to the Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements;
- monitoring the practice and list of required documents for visas through the website and existing digital instruments;
- further alignment of communication practices to improve public understanding of visa procedures;
- continued monitoring of appointment management systems and cooperation with external service providers;
- adaptation to new EU digital and border-management systems affecting visa processing.

### **5. Other issues**

MS exchanged views on broader regional and external developments potentially affecting visa practices, including new entry requirements introduced by third countries for Kazakh citizens and their possible impact on travel patterns and public perception of mobility regimes

LSC also discussed emerging trends related to visa applications submitted by third-country nationals residing temporarily in Kazakhstan, highlighting differing national practices and the need for continued information exchange to ensure coherent approaches.

Furthermore, MS examined developments in the online environment related to visa assistance services. Monitoring activities identified an increasing presence of commercial actors promoting visa-related services through social media platforms, sometimes using misleading advertising practices. EUDEL and MS agreed to continue monitoring such developments and exchange relevant information where appropriate.

\*\*\*

*The report was consulted with and endorsed by all the members of the LSC group in Kazakhstan.*



20/01/2026

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN KENYA**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

There are 18 Schengen EU member states represented in Kenya (AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE and SK) and 2 Schengen non-EU countries (CH, NO). All of the countries have embassies in Nairobi; some offer also consular services outside of Nairobi (e.g. IT has a visa centre in Mombasa) and several have visa hubs and handle visa applications from other countries in the wider region (e.g. CH, DK, ES, FR, HU, SE, NO, RO). One of the LSC members was not issuing Schengen visas in 2025 (PT) and is represented by EL.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

LSC Group met on monthly basis in 2025. Meetings are conducted in a hybrid format. Most of the countries participated regularly in LSC meetings, which are run back-to-back with meetings of the Local Consular Cooperation (LCC) group. LSC meetings were chaired by EU Delegation (Deputy Head of Delegation). Minutes were prepared by EU DEL and were shared with LSC members as well as with EU HQ.

**3. State of play**

**3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Member States reported no significant problems in implementation, particularly with respect to Kenyan visa applications. Main issues identified during the year included submission of fake bank statements, submission of NVs not signed by MFA individuals authorized to sign travel NVs and use of the other fake documents (e.g. employment letters). In case of fake documents originating from the government, Embassies normally approach MFA for clarification. In case of suspicious bank statements, Embassies ask for verification directly by banks.

LSC members also reported a number of suspicious study visa requests and discussed policies that individual Member States have in place to discourage fraudulent visa applications. All in all most problems relate to applications coming from other countries in the region covered by LSC members in Nairobi. Somalia is a particular case – both in terms of visa applications and visa fraud - as almost all MSs do not recognize Somali passports. Several MSs noted cases involving individuals travelling to the EU on KE passport, only to eventually claim political asylum as Somali nationals.

Most LSC members work through external service providers - VFS (AT, CH, HU, DK, FI, IT, NL, NO, SE); TLS (BE, DE, FR); BLS (ES), while few engage directly with visa applicants (CZ, EL, PL, RO, SK). Some cases of problems with external provider were reported (e.g. appointments outside of the booking system) as well as cases of incomplete application files, or biometric data of insufficient quality. Staff of external service providers receive training both by the service companies and Embassies who work with them.

Waiting times ranged from 0 up to 2 months. Some cases of attempted visa shopping were reported – these cases tend to increase at the time of major events in a particular MS, resulting then in long waiting period for submission of applications to get visa for entry into that MS. LSC members are in regular contact and share information to ensure smooth implementation of the Visa Code.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The harmonized list of supporting documents for visa applications in Kenya was adopted on 26 June 2023 (C(2023) 4053) with implementation starting immediately thereafter. There were no difficulties in implementation in 2025. LSC group revised and approved an updated list of TMI companies in 2025. None of the MSs has raised any difficulty with the implementation of the harmonized list of documents in 2025. There was no request for amendments to the list. One element missing in the harmonized list of supporting documents though, is travel insurance, which applicants are required to submit when applying for Schengen visa in Kenya.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

There has been no indication of the need to adapt general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code in 2025. LSC members reported compliance – i.e. multiple entry visas according to the cascade rules found in the Visa Code Handbook (8.4.3.1) to those, who fulfil the requirements of Article 24 (2).

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Some practices could be more harmonized – e.g. practice for acceptance of the proof of marriage between EU citizen and non-EU citizen, when applying for free Schengen visas. Operating procedures for working with external service providers as well as training for their staff could be also more harmonized.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

The exchange of information within the LSC group worked well. The hybrid nature of LSC meetings facilitated the participation of those who were not able to take part in person. Information also continued to be shared via email and a dedicated WhatsApp group. Visa statistics were shared orally during the LSC meetings, indicating that the number of applications continued to increase as have the refusal rates. These figures in case of some LSC members include also applications from other countries in the region and thus do not fully capture the situation in Kenya. Cooperation with local authorities was generally good.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

Nothing to report.

## **4. Challenges**

No specific challenges identified. In 2026, LSC will continue to focus on regular exchange of information and assessment of visa code implementation.

## **5. Other issues**

Nothing to report.



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO KOREA**

09/02/26

## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN REPUBLIC OF KOREA (ROK)**

### **2025 REPORT**

#### **1. Introduction**

25 EU Member States (EU MS) out of 27 are present in the Republic of Korea (RoK). Malta covers the RoK from their MFA in Malta, Cyprus from their embassy located in Beijing and since September 2025 from Tokyo, Japan and the Embassy of Iceland responsible for RoK is located in Tokyo as well.

The agreements of representation in Schengen visa matters<sup>7</sup> were as follows:

- Embassy of Austria represents Malta;
- Embassy of Belgium represents Luxembourg;
- Embassy of Switzerland represents Liechtenstein.
- Embassy of Poland represents Estonia.
- Embassy of Slovakia represents Latvia.
- Embassy of Sweden: for visa application to Sweden, Denmark and Iceland applicants have to contact VFS Seoul. The Swedish Embassy in Bangkok processes them.
- Embassy of Norway: VFS Seoul deals with visa requests to Norway. Norwegian Embassy in Beijing processes and decides on them.

---

<sup>7</sup> This does not necessarily imply the same arrangements for consular matters more widely.

## 2. LSC meetings held in 2025

From January to December 2025, four EU/LSC cooperation group meetings were held on 5 February, 28 May, 24 September and 26 November 2025 (plus 2 additional consular meetings).

During this period, at the request of the Polish Embassy in its capacity of EU Council Presidency in 1H 2025 and of the Danish Embassy in its capacity of EU Council Presidency in 2H 2025, EUDEL acted as the chair of the group's meetings. All MS agreed to that. The EU Delegation supported as well with logistics, providing a meeting room at the EU Delegation, drafting minutes, etc.

A large majority of EU MS participated in all meetings. Switzerland and Norway also attended the LSC meetings regularly (Iceland and Liechtenstein do not have diplomatic representation in the RoK).

## 3. State of play

### 3.1 Application of the Visa Code

As no visas are required for RoK citizens travelling to the EU/Schengen area, LSC discussions on the application of the EU Visa Code<sup>8</sup> have been relatively limited and discussed only when problematical cases were brought up by EU MS/Schengen countries.

MS exhibit a high level of preparedness to implement tasks under the Visa Code, with most embassies managing waiting times for appointments efficiently. Systems in place generally allow for timely scheduling and processing of visa applications, ensuring adherence to Visa Code requirements.

Temporary delays may occur during peak periods (spring and autumn) due to the concurrent processing of national long-term (e.g. student) visa applications and limited staffing.

### 3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The harmonised list of supporting documents for the RoK was adopted by Commission Decision on 24 October 2018<sup>9</sup>, following discussion and agreement by the LSC. MS embassies in 2025 did not raise a need to update the agreed list. The Delegation was not made aware of significant issues regarding implementation.

---

<sup>8</sup> See [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/regulation-ec-no-8102009-european-parliament-and-council-13-july-2009\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/regulation-ec-no-8102009-european-parliament-and-council-13-july-2009_en)

<sup>9</sup> See [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/document/download/a7a18412-bf69-480c-81ad-c197cac18e5b\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/document/download/a7a18412-bf69-480c-81ad-c197cac18e5b_en) and [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/document/download/d8965f84-a157-4817-8ee6-a73e8064fa7a\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/document/download/d8965f84-a157-4817-8ee6-a73e8064fa7a_en)

### 3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')

No major issues raised by Member States on this issue during the reporting period.

Due to visa-free entry for Korean nationals, requests for multiple-entry visas are relatively rare. Some countries utilizing the C Visa cascade system are:

- AT: The C Visa cascade is applied but accounts for less than 1% of total applications.
- CZ: Applies the Visa Code and Visa Facilitation Agreement cascades where possible.
- DE: Actively uses the visa cascade, though only about 4% of applicants qualify.
- FR: Employs the visa cascade system effectively (15,86% MULT visa rate).
- HR: Reports that none of its applicants were eligible for the cascade rule.
- PL: Applies visa cascade with 10,61% MULT visa rate.
- SK: Utilizes the cascade system, albeit infrequently, citing only one case recently involving a Taiwanese citizen in upper management with frequent travels.

### 3.4 Harmonisation of practices

No further initiatives taken as the existing state of affairs is considered satisfactory.

### 3.5 Exchange of information

#### - Quarterly Statistics:

Application numbers among Schengen embassies vary widely, ranging from several hundreds in larger operations (such as FR, CZ, DE, ) to just a few dozen or even single digits in smaller countries or cases of visa representation. Reported refusal rates are around 10%.

Nationality trends highlight a significant influx of applications from Korean nationals, driven by temporary work or related to festivals, concerts, and business projects in countries such as DE and CZ. **The rise by applications from Korean nationals for short-stay visas related to gainful activities, likely reflects stricter compliance by Korean firms with applicable legal requirements (after the expulsion of several hundred of Korean workers from the US last year).**

Other countries like HU primarily see applications from Chinese and Russian citizens, with tourism and business being predominant reasons for travel.

PT reported a remarkable 129% increase in visas issued, with professional and tourism purposes leading the surge. Likewise, PL experienced an 18% growth in applications, with most applicants being Chinese citizens of Korean origin. Croatia (+40%) and BG recorded modest total numbers but nonetheless experienced growth, indicating a general upward trend in visa requests after (post COVID) years with lower figures.

- **Cases of Fraud:**

Fraud cases are generally rare among Schengen embassies. AT reported occasional incidents involving document forgery but noted effective cooperation with their visa processing service provider, VFS. HU identified trends of uniform itineraries from certain nationalities, suggesting applicants prefer other destinations, yet apply in HU potentially for easier processing.

- **Travel Medical Insurance (TMI):**

Travel medical insurance compliance is smooth overall, with compliant providers, ensuring adherence to Schengen requirements. CZ observed instances where applicants provided TMI valid only for CZ. These cases were resolved by requesting insurance coverage for the entire Schengen area.

- **Problems Linked to the Implementation of TMI Rules:**

The implementation of TMI rules generally faces no hindrances, underscoring a stable framework for insurance policy adherence across embassies.

- **Cooperation with Local Authorities and Companies:**

Embassies practice varied levels of cooperation with local entities. For example, PT maintains contact with employers via phone to verify employment details and authenticity of employment certificates. HR also reported positive cooperation with local employers and travel companies for independent verification purposes when necessary.

- **Cooperation with External Service Providers and Monitoring:**

Most embassies do not engage extensively with external service providers. Most Embassies processes applications directly without external involvement, either due to manageable and low numbers of applications or to focus on internal processing for efficiency and control reasons (CZ, HU,..). No joint monitoring of VFS as of now.

- **Use of VISMail and the Visa Information System:**

VISMail usage varies among embassies. PT utilises the system for security checks but notes its limitations, such as insufficient direct contact functionalities with other embassies, necessitating separate communication via email or phone. PL maintains regular access to VISMail, though last communications date back to 2018, highlighting infrequent exchanges.

- **Other Issues:**

HU reported issues with no-shows and increased visa shopping, which have been communicated to their headquarters. PT dealt with a situation involving a Pakistani applicant seeking deletion of personal data in VIS after multiple refusals. PL observed a significant increase in the number of National Visa applications from citizens of the ROK after introduction of the EES at the borders.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

New EU-ETDs: In line with instructions received we have informed relevant local Korean authorities via MOFA and submitted the templates in July. 2 new ETDs have already been issued by MS and the persons did not experience any unusual difficulties traveling back with them e.g. at border authorities.

## **4. Challenges**

No challenges to be addressed have been listed in the 2024 report, therefore no response was necessary.

No subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2026) were raised by Member States.

## **5. Other issues**

From the Korean side, it is notable that the RoK authorities extended the K-ETA exemption for EU passport holders for 2026.

Since 1 September 2021 a new online authorisation system, called K-ETA came into force (resembling the US ESTA system and future ETIAS). K-ETA Korea electronic travel authorization [www.k-eta.go.kr](http://www.k-eta.go.kr) would be mandatory for all foreigners entering the Republic of Korea (RoK) including those from the EU with the exception of diplomatic & official passport holders (from 9 January 2023 onwards).

This report has been cleared with the local LSC EU/Schengen Coordination group.



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN KOSOVO**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

Kosovo hosts diplomatic missions of 17 Member States of the EU and Schengen Area in Pristina.

<b>Member States present</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of mission(s)</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	Pristina	Embassy
<b>Bulgaria</b>	Pristina	Embassy
<b>Czechia</b>	Pristina	Embassy
<b>Germany</b>	Pristina	Embassy
<b>Greece</b>	Pristina	Liaison Office
<b>France</b>	Pristina	Embassy
<b>Croatia</b>	Pristina	Embassy
<b>Italy</b>	Pristina	Embassy
<b>Luxembourg</b>	Pristina	Embassy
<b>Hungary</b>	Pristina	Embassy
<b>Netherlands</b>	Pristina	Embassy
<b>Austria</b>	Pristina	Embassy
<b>Romania</b>	Pristina	Liaison Office
<b>Slovenia</b>	Pristina	Embassy
<b>Finland</b>	Pristina	Embassy
<b>Sweden</b>	Pristina	Embassy
<b>Switzerland</b>	Pristina	Embassy

Another 11 EU and Schengen Area Member States are accredited in Kosovo, from abroad.

<b>MS accredited from abroad</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of mission</b>
<b>Denmark</b>	Vienna	Embassy
<b>Estonia</b>	Vienna	Embassy
<b>Ireland</b>	Budapest	Embassy
<b>Latvia</b>	Praha	Embassy
<b>Lithuania</b>	Zagreb	Embassy
<b>Malta</b>	Valletta	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>Poland</b>	Skopje	Embassy (consular relations)
<b>Portugal</b>	Budapest	Embassy
<b>Slovakia</b>	Belgrade	Embassy
<b>Norway</b>	Ankara	Embassy
<b>Iceland</b>	Reykjavik	Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Following the entry into force of visa liberalisation for Kosovo passport holders on 1 January 2024, local Schengen cooperation in 2025 continued in an adapted format. The focus of exchanges shifted from visa processing to monitoring trends related to visa-free travel, visa policy alignment, and broader developments relevant to the common EU visa policy.

## **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

In 2025, two joint meetings of the Local Schengen Cooperation (LSC) and Local Consular Cooperation (LCC) groups were held.

Both meetings took place in a hybrid format, allowing participation of resident and non-resident Member States. Attendance was generally good, with regular participation by resident missions and online participation by non-resident Member States.

The meeting held in August 2025 included exchanges on recent developments related to the Entry/Exit System (EES) and ETIAS, as well as updated trends regarding asylum applications by Kosovo nationals in Member States, which showed a continued decrease. No substantive concerns were raised by Member States.

The meeting held in November 2025 focused on updated EUROSTAT data on asylum applications, developments related to EES and ETIAS, and broader Schengen-related developments.

Meetings served as a platform for regular information exchange and coordination among Member States. Reports and summaries were shared with participants, and coordination with non-resident Member States was ensured through hybrid participation and follow-up exchanges.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Following visa liberalisation, the number of visa applications lodged in Kosovo remained low in 2025. Member States issuing Schengen visas continued to ensure full preparedness to apply the Visa Code for categories still subject to visa requirements.

No significant challenges were reported regarding the implementation of the Visa Code. In particular, no issues were identified concerning waiting times for appointments, cooperation with external service providers, or visa shopping.

Member States continued to apply the Visa Code in a consistent and harmonised manner.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The harmonised list of supporting documents, established in previous years, remained in place and continued to be applied.

No need to amend the existing list was identified during the reporting period.

#### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas ('MEV cascades')**

No need was identified to adapt practices related to multiple-entry visas in 2025. Given the significantly declined number of visa applications post Visa Liberalisation (2024), this issue did not feature prominently in discussions.

Member States continued to apply the general provisions of the Visa Code, including case-by-case assessment of migration and security risks.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

In 2025, harmonisation efforts focused on maintaining a shared understanding of developments relevant to the common EU visa policy in a post-visa liberalisation context.

The LSC continued to provide a platform for coordination on visa policy alignment, monitoring of travel trends, and preparation for future systems such as EES and ETIAS.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Information exchange within the LSC remained regular and constructive.

In the post-visa liberalisation context, exchanges focused primarily on trends related to visa-free travel by Kosovo nationals, including asylum applications and other indicators relevant to the functioning of the visa-free regime. Following a significant increase in 2024, asylum applications showed a marked decrease during 2025, returning to levels broadly comparable to those observed prior to visa liberalisation. These trends remained under close monitoring within the framework of the visa suspension mechanism, including through continued engagement with the Kosovo authorities.

The LSC also provided a forum for exchanges on visa policy alignment and developments relevant to the EU visa suspension framework.

Broader developments relevant to document security were also noted, including information shared at EU level regarding cases of false or forged documents and instances involving identity changes. While no specific trends were reported within the LSC in Kosovo, these aspects remain relevant for the overall assessment of risks related to visa-free travel.

No significant issues were reported in 2025 regarding fraud, travel medical insurance, cooperation with external service providers, or the use of VISMail and the Visa Information System.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

No additional specific initiatives directly related to visa policy implementation were reported.

## **4. Challenges**

The main challenge identified in the 2024 report remained relevant in 2025, namely the need to monitor the impact of visa liberalisation and ensure the continued proper functioning of the visa-free regime.

Following a significant increase in asylum applications in 2024, trends showed a marked decrease in 2025, returning to levels broadly comparable to the pre-liberalisation period. Continued monitoring remained necessary in the context of the EU visa suspension mechanism, including with regard to indicators such as asylum applications, refusals of entry and irregular stay. Engagement with the Kosovo authorities on these issues remained constructive.

Visa policy alignment with the EU acquis remained an outstanding issue in 2025. While some progress was recorded, including the alignment of one additional third country (Fiji), Kosovo's visa policy continues to diverge from that of the EU. A significant number of third countries remain visa-free in Kosovo while subject to visa requirements in the EU, which presents a continued risk of irregular migration to the EU. Kosovo has committed to progressively align its visa policy, including through the transfer of at least one country per year to the visa-required list. However, further substantial efforts are required to achieve full alignment.

Readmission cooperation remained overall satisfactory in 2025, with Kosovo continuing to engage constructively with Member States. However, some operational challenges persisted, including occasional delays in processing readmission requests and isolated cases requiring procedural follow-up. Ensuring consistent and timely implementation of readmission obligations with all Member States remains an area to be monitored.

Looking ahead to 2026, the LSC is expected to continue focusing on monitoring trends related to visa-free travel, visa policy alignment, follow-up to the visa suspension mechanism, and developments related to the implementation of EES and ETIAS.

## **5. Other issues**

A matter of continued relevance was the implementation of the EU decision extending visa-free travel to Serbian nationals residing in Kosovo holding passports issued by Serbia's Coordination Directorate.

The issue remained politically sensitive and continued to generate differing reactions among stakeholders. In practice, these passports are not recognised by the Kosovo authorities for direct travel from Pristina International Airport, which limits their use locally despite the EU visa-free regime.

***Approved by all Member States present in Kosovo***



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN THE STATE OF KUWAIT**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

16 EU Member States (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, MT, NL, PL, RO) are represented locally. The remaining 11 EU Member States are represented by their Embassies in other Gulf States, mostly in the UAE (EE, IE, LT, LU, LV, PT, SE, SI), while FI is represented by its Embassy in Qatar, DK and SK by their Embassies in Saudi Arabia. From non-EU Schengen Member States CH has an Embassy in Kuwait, and NO is accredited from UAE. Both are regularly included in the Local Schengen Cooperation.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

EUDEL organised four formal LSC meetings (back-to-back with EU LCC meetings), one of which was hosted by the PL Presidency. In informal capacity, in January 2025 FR invited the LSC to the opening of their new Visa Application Centre.

All LSC meetings were very well attended, with only 1-2 resident MS absent on occasion. The meetings were chaired by the EUDEL. The minutes of the meetings were drafted by the EUDEL and circulated to resident and non-resident EU MS.

The year 2025 was marked by two major discussions for the LSC/LCC group: the draft Harmonised Lists of Supporting Documents for Schengen Visa Applicants, which was sent back twice from the Visa Committee with some proposed changes. Moreover, the Revocation of Kuwaiti Nationality of some 50 000 people, and its' consequences for those wanting to travel to Schengen area was discussed on several occasion throughout the year.

Ad-hoc and more informally various issues are frequently discussed through exchanging emails.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

The LSC regularly discussed the local implementation of the Visa Code and the Visa Cascade Implementing Decision for Kuwaiti citizens, which is in force since 8 September 2023, as well as changes in the application trends because of the Visa Cascade Decision.

Throughout the year major point of discussion – partially overlapping with Consular cooperation – has been the revocation of Kuwaiti citizenship of over 50 000 persons (mainly women married to Kuwaiti men), which has led to uncertainties regarding their citizenship status, their future travel documents as well as handling of their possible Schengen visa applications.

The LSC also regularly discussed the Kuwaiti calls for Visa free travel to Schengen Area, including frequent rumours and misinformation on social media in relation to this.

Furthermore, some cases of fraud and visa shopping have been discussed during the meetings.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The draft Harmonised Lists of Supporting Documents for Schengen Visa Applicants, originally agreed locally in late 2024, was sent back twice from the Visa Committee with some proposed changes. The proof of financial means for Kuwaiti applicants, and the required period of validity of the Kuwaiti Civil-ID after return from Schengen Area for non-Kuwaiti applicants were the main points in this regard. The completion of this exercise is expected to take place in early 2026.

#### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

There is a generous 5-year visa cascade regime in place for Kuwaiti nationals. Currently no visa cascade decision is applicable to any other nationals residing in Kuwait, nor has there been any major discussions towards adaptation of such decision for other groups of applicants.

#### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Besides harmonisation of the list of supporting documents, in 2025 the LSC discussed several specific cases and how to handle these in a harmonised way, should similar cases occur in future.

Furthermore, in April 2025 DE organised a training for their Consular and Visa staff on detecting document fraud and imposters, to which all Schengen MS were invited to join.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Exchange of data on application trends (overall figures, refusal rates) has been discussed in the LSC meetings on ad-hoc basis. There are also regular exchanges regarding (attempted) cases of fraud and other reoccurring issues with applicants from some nationalities.

LSC also discussed the collaboration with service providers, and which MS use them locally, as well as cooperation with local authorities, banks and travel/transport companies. While the cooperation with service providers seem to work well, the experiences with local authorities and private companies are rather mixed, whereby good cooperation is often dependent on knowing the right counterparts personally, and/or on local (Arabic) language skills.

EUDEL kept the MS informed of policy updates from DG HOME, such as the launch of the new Entry/Exit System (EES) as well as of the upcoming launch of ETIAS in 2026. A communication campaign on the EES took place in autumn 2025.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

N/A.

## **4. Challenges**

As the adoption of the harmonised lists of supporting documents for Schengen visa applicants applying in Kuwait was not reached in 2025, which goal was dependent on approval by the Visa Committee, this will remain the main goal to be achieved in 2026.

The modernisation of the EU Delegation and reduction of its diplomatic staff in 2026 will pose a challenge for the EU coordination capacity of the Delegation. At the same time the LSC has requested for a higher frequency of the meetings, in order to be able to discuss major trends and issues in a timelier manner.

## **5. Other issues**

All represented Schengen Member States' Embassies have been consulted during the drafting process of this report and have approved it.



23 February 2026

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN KYRGYZSTAN**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

EU Member States present in the capital Bishkek with resident Embassies (DE, FR, HU). Embassy of Switzerland is also present.

Schengen Member States represented by Germany (BE, LUX, PT, NO).

Schengen Member States represented by Switzerland (FR, PL, CZ, SVN, SK, EE, LV, LIE)

Schengen Member States represented by Hungary (ML, IT, LIT, ES, NL, GR, SWE, AUT). LIT is and AUT are represented only as far as visas for officials are concerned.

FR Embassy in Bishkek does not issue visas. The Consul of FR in Astana covers Kyrgyzstan on LSC issues.

Member States who have agreements with private companies where citizens of Kyrgyzstan can submit applications:

HU VFS Global Bishkek

DE Visametric Bishkek

FIN VFS Global Bishkek

FR VFS in Almaty (Kazakhstan)

GRE VFS Global Bishkek

CRO VFS Global Bishkek

CZ VFS Global Bishkek

IT VFS Global Bishkek

AT VFS Global Bishkek

Norway: for residence permits Kyrgyzstan citizens/residents can apply at VFS in Almaty, Astana, as well as at any VFS that falls under the Norway immigration hub in Ankara.

RO visa applications to the Embassy in Astana through the portal [www.evisa.mae.ro](http://www.evisa.mae.ro)

DK VFS Global in Almaty for residence and work permit (long stay visa); for short stay visa applications only at DK missions.

**Member States Embassies based abroad and accredited to Kyrgyzstan are as follows:**

**In Astana, Kazakhstan:** BE, NED, LIT, LV, CRO, CZ, SVK, GRE, ES, PL, EE, FIN, IT, RO, BG, AT

**In Moscow, RF:** SLVN, CYP, PT, IRL, DK

**In Ankara, Turkiye:** SWE

LUX and MT do not have Embassies accredited to Kyrgyzstan, thus for LSC issues they communicate from their capitals.

Norway and ISL have accredited Ambassadors based in their capitals. LIE has no accredited Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan and on LSC issues is represented by Switzerland.

## **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

Four LSC meetings took place in the course of 2025 (January, April, September, December). These meetings were well attended by the MS present in Bishkek and Switzerland, as well as online by several MS Embassies accredited to Kyrgyzstan from Astana and from Moscow. The meetings were chaired by the EU Delegation, who also prepared the first draft of the minutes accordingly.

Several of the Consuls (also those based abroad and accredited in Kyrgyzstan) are included in a dedicated Signal group for Consuls accredited/covering Kyrgyzstan. This Signal group was created in 2024.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Embassies and EU DEL are prepared to ensure tasks, as required by the Visa Code.

A specific problem is securing legal use of issued visas by Kyrgyz citizens. On numerous occasions visas are used not in destinations initially indicated in the application form.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

On-going. Partially completed. Due to new circumstances and attempts of presenting false application information some Embassies are forced to request additional documents, for example bank statements for the last 6 months (instead of last 3 months). Another challenge is improper behaviour of travel companies, some of which frequently attempt to receive financial gains by “selling” timeslots to applicants, as well as by using other illegal practices.

#### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code (‘MEV cascades’)**

In 2025 the LSC group decided that there is no need, nor necessary conditions to adapt the general rules.

#### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

In order to ensure exchange and harmonisation, meetings on a regular basis are planned and conducted.

#### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Information regarding i.e. visa fraud, information about external service providers is shared by the MS. There is regular cooperation regarding individual cases. Other information shared is related to medical insurance companies, banks, travel agencies.

Statistics are usually shared on an ad hoc basis.

#### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

#### **4. Challenges**

In 2025 the main challenges were related to applicants submitting fake, misleading supporting documents in order to obtain Schengen visa.

Local travel companies use fraud simulating they booked timeslot and obtained visas for applicants, with the latter discovering all this only after having paid a significant fee. There are many suspicious advertisements about guaranteed receiving of visas and resident permits/citizenships in MS.

Love fraud is also often used, where MS citizens based abroad are tricked to pay money for non-existing people and expenses.

#### **5. Other issues**

Kyrgyzstan illegal immigration to the US by visa fraud, Schengen Visa application in order to travel to Panama, Mexico, Costa Rica or to apply for visa to the US in EU Member States.

According to the information received, some of travel companies help applicants to submit suspicious documents to help illegal immigration, also to USA.



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO LEBANON**

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN LEBANON  
2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

In Lebanon 17 Member States (MS) are present and issuing Schengen visas: Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Finland and Sweden. Cyprus is issuing type C visa.

8 MS represent other MS on issuing visas: Belgium (Luxembourg), Spain (Portugal), France (Estonia), Norway (Iceland), Italy (Malta), Hungary (Latvia, Slovenia), Austria (Lithuania) and Switzerland (Liechtenstein).

There are no LSC consular sections in Lebanon outside Beirut.

At the end of 2025, 13 MS deal in Beirut with Schengen visa applications by Syrian nationals residing in Syria: Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland.

Number of MS (eg. Slovakia) are also receiving visa applications from Iraqi and Jordanian nationals residing in Iraq and Jordan respectively.

Sweden does not receive visa applications in Lebanon.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

4 LSC meetings were held in total during 2025. All four were physical meetings at the EU Delegation (EU DEL), but a WebEx link was provided, upon request, to allow consuls residing outside Lebanon to join.

The meetings were generally very well attended. The EU DEL chaired the LSC meetings, while MS submitted input for the agenda. Minutes were prepared by the EU DEL and adopted by the MS at the next LSC meeting.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

The MS are generally well equipped to apply the Visa Code and share information on different kinds of visa matters.

MS exchange information with each other on a regular basis, either during the LSC meetings or via email and WhatsApp (for non-sensitive information). The EU DEL organises and chairs the LSC meetings according to Article 48 of the Visa Code.

The changes in political situation in Syria increased the number of visa applicants from Syria. Arrival of applicants for their interview from Syria requires additional coordination with Lebanese authorities, particularly when applicants cross the border into Lebanon. Fraudulent documentation remained an issue for both Lebanese and Syrian applicants.

Some MS collaborate with external visa service providers, however, due to the potential migration risk associated with applicants, particularly applicants from Syria, MS often continue to process their Schengen visa applications directly or invites applicants for additional interviews as necessary.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The harmonised list of supporting documents for short stay visa for Lebanese applicants was adopted in March 2024. MS websites and forms are in line with the language and requirements of the harmonized list.

#### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

MS confirm that they continued to apply the 'cascade' despite the security situation. Nevertheless, each application is assessed individually taking into account the previous visa obtained, the full documentation of the application as well as the economic means and professional situation of the applicants and its connection with the economic situation in Lebanon. Falsified and fake supporting documents continue to be an issue leading generally to the refusal of the application although some MS reported an improvement in the quality of the application file and of the profile of the applicants in the last months of 2025.

#### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Nothing to report.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

The meetings have been used as a platform to exchange information on:

- visa trends and statistics, especially varying refusal rates and fluctuating numbers regarding both Lebanese and Syrian applicants, waiting times.
- cases of fraud (fake and falsified documents, incl. identity documents, travel documents, bank statements, insurance certificates, etc.),
- application of the cascade for MEV,
- cooperation with local authorities.
- access to consulates in Beirut for applicants from Syria

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

Nothing to report.

## **4. Challenges**

Adapting to the changing situation in Lebanon and Syria will continue to be a challenge for visa sections in Beirut as well as detecting and countering fraud schemes. While MS are determined to keep the door to the Schengen area open for applicants, the current situation requires a thorough check of the situation of the applicant and the documents submitted.

Due to the perceived instability of the security situation, the applicants feel the need to apply for visa “in case” of a quick change.

Documents most susceptible to fraud include (but are not limited to) bank accounts, employer statements and payslips, mirroring the consequences of the economic crisis which began in 2019.

A return to a functioning financial system and a positive economic outlook might make a revision of the harmonized list of supporting documents for short stay visa for Lebanese applicants necessary in the coming years.

## **5. Other issues**

Nothing to report.

**\*\* The content of this report has been approved by the MS \*\***



03/03/2026

**COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET  
LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC) A MADAGASCAR**

**RAPPORT 2025**

**1. Introduction**

Trois Etats membres Schengen sont présents (CH, DE, FR).

Sont représentés

- par la France : Allemagne (uniquement pour les ressortissants malgaches), Autriche, Belgique, Espagne, Estonie, Finlande, Grèce, Italie, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovénie, République tchèque (FR représente en outre Islande) ;
- par la Suisse : Hongrie, Norvège, Pays-Bas, Pologne, Suède + Liechtenstein

L'Allemagne délivre les visas de longue durée et certains visas Schengen.

**2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2025**

Une réunion a eu lieu, en février 2025, présidée par la DUE (qui établit le compte-rendu).

**3. État des lieux**

**3.1 Application du Code des Visas**

Après une période restée difficile durant les trois premiers trimestres, les délais de rendez-vous pour le dépôt des dossiers auprès du prestataire du consulat général de France ont été résorbés et ne sont plus supérieurs à J+3 (la plupart du temps J+1). Le visa shopping est limité. La représentation de l'Italie représente une charge de travail importante pour le consulat général de France (1239 visas délivrés en 2025, soit 10% du total des visas).

### 3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs.

Une clarification de ce que les différents Etats membres de destination exigent/admettent comme justificatifs à l'appui des visas Schengen serait souhaitée par les deux consulats délivrant des visas en représentation.

### 3.3 Estimation du besoin d'adapter les règles générales relatives à la délivrance des visas à entrées multiples aux demandeurs en vertu de l'Article 24(2) du Code des Visas (« cascades MEV »)

Les consulats appliquent au mieux de leurs possibilités les règles relatives aux visas à entrées multiples : plus d'un tiers des visas Schengen délivrés par le consulat général de France en 2025 ont été des visas de circulation. Cet élan reste jusqu'ici freiné par le fait que les passeports malgaches n'ont une validité que de cinq ans. Cette règle semble en passe d'être modifiée pour passer à 10 ans, ce qui permettrait d'élargir encore l'application de cette possibilité, dans un contexte local jugé favorable.

### 3.4 Harmonisation des procédures

**Les consuls attirent l'attention sur des difficultés liées à l'application de l'article 3 de la directive 2004/38/CE.** Cet article dispose que *« la présente directive s'applique à tout citoyen de l'Union qui se rend ou séjourne dans un État membre autre que celui dont il a la nationalité, ainsi qu'aux membres de sa famille, tels que définis à l'article 2, point 2), qui l'accompagnent ou le rejoignent. »*

En conséquence, le poste consulaire ne peut pas instruire un visa « membre de famille UE » si le projet de voyage est de se rendre dans le pays dont le ressortissant UE tire sa nationalité. Il faut instruire un VCS Schengen uniforme correspondant au motif de séjour, en appliquant les frais correspondants. Si leur projet est de se rendre dans un autre État membre que ce pays, alors l'instruction de ce visa est possible. La plupart des demandeurs ne comprennent (logiquement) pas cette spécificité, ce qui donne lieu à des refus de visa pour des membres de famille de ressortissants européens se rendant dans leur propre pays.

### 3.5 Echange d'informations

*Décrivez comment se déroule l'échange des informations LSC:*

- *statistiques trimestrielles; (brève description qualitative des échanges/tendances observées; n'ajoutez pas de tableaux ou d'annexes de statistiques)*

Les échanges d'information ont lieu de manière fluide.

- *cas de fraude*

Surtout des relevés bancaires et attestations d'emploi falsifiés, des réservations d'hôtel annulées avant le traitement du visa. Des « agences » spécialisées extorquent des sommes importantes à des demandeurs de visa et font souvent échouer des demandes a priori viables en insérant de faux documents dans le dossier. Des embryons de filières d'émigration illégale vers la France et l'Allemagne sont identifiés et contrés. Une attention particulière est portée aux demandes de visa « au pair », en particulier vers l'Allemagne.

- *assurance médicale de voyage (càd quelles sont les compagnies d'assurances qui offrent une assurance conforme);*
- *quels sont les problèmes liés à la mise en œuvre des règles relatives à l'assurance médicale de voyage;*

Pas de problème signalé concernant les assurances. Les requérants présentent une assurance conclue soit par l'hôte dans le pays de destination, soit par les compagnies d'assurance locales ARO, AXA ou HAVANA.

- *coopération avec les autorités locales et les compagnies locales (par exemple : banques, employeurs, compagnies de transport);*

Coopération satisfaisante, mais des doutes ont surgi concernant une banque ayant présenté comme faux des relevés authentiques.

- *coopération avec les prestataires de service et contrôle (citez des initiatives de contrôles exécutés en commun ou pour le compte d'autres Etats Membres);*
- *utilisation du VISMail et du Visa Information System;*

Une utilisation accrue de VISMail est souhaitée.

- *autres.*

### **3.6 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC**

Le consulat général de France compte communiquer davantage en direction des demandeurs de visa pour expliquer les procédures et décourager la fraude. Une communication sera aussi mise en place lors de l'entrée en vigueur pleinement effective du nouveau système d'entrée/sortie.

#### **4. Défis**

Dans un pays vaste et enclavé, l'accessibilité du dépôt de demande de visa est un défi. TLS (opérateur pour la France) assure tous les quinze jours une permanence à Tamatave (deuxième ville du pays). Il est envisagé d'élargir ce dispositif à d'autres villes.

Le maintien d'un délai de traitement rapide reste, pour le poste consulaire français, conditionné au maintien constant de moyens humains dédiés au traitement des demandes. Les visas étudiants (nationaux) pèsent sur la charge de travail pendant plusieurs mois de l'année.

#### **5. Divers**



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO MALAYSIA

27 February 2026

## LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN MALAYSIA 2025 REPORT

### 1. Introduction

Seventeen EU Member States in the Schengen Area have diplomatic representations in Malaysia (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden). Many Member States have Honorary Consular representations all across Malaysia. Some Member States are only represented by an Honorary Consul.

From the non-EU Schengen countries, Switzerland and Norway have diplomatic representations in Kuala Lumpur.

### 2. LSC meetings held in 2025

The EU Delegation hosted and chaired six LSC meetings in 2025, of which all were organised back-to-back with the Local Consular Cooperation meetings. The meetings were generally well attended.

The EU Delegation with inputs from Member States prepares the agendas and reports. The LSC Meeting reports are approved by a silent procedure by the EU MS.

### 3. State of play

#### 3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The cooperation between EU (and Schengen) Member States and the EU Delegation is close and information is shared according to the Visa Code.

Different MS have different waiting and processing times.

Malaysia has visa free regime with Schengen zone. Therefore, the number of Schengen visa applications is relatively low as they mainly come from the citizens of other countries who legally stay long-term in Malaysia. The refusal rates for Schengen Visas in 2025 varied across MS embassies. For most embassies the refusal rates ranged between 18% and 33%, though some were as low as 1,5%, whereas others had refusal rates reaching 55%.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

MS present consider that harmonisation of practices is already acquired.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

In general, majority of MS are back on track for the implementation of the MEV cascade, with a flexibility based on the situation (bona fide, applications prior to 2020, etc.).

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Member States share information during the LSC meetings in view of potential harmonisation of practices. Some of the issues discussed by the LSC in 2025, which are related to potential harmonisation of practices, included checklists C type visa requirements, as well as the practices for updating prices for consular services according to the exchange rate.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Schengen Member States share visa statistics on a yearly basis, which is considered as an adequate frequency. Numbers for visa applications are limited in Malaysia, mainly because Malaysians are exempt from short-stay visa requirements.

Member States share their observations on new documentations issued by Malaysian authorities and discuss any problems they might have faced in the cooperation with local authorities.

VISMail is not used regularly.

## **4. Challenges**

Member States continue to face sometimes challenges in receiving consistent and timely information from the Malaysian authorities. The Ministry of Home Affairs and its subordinate Immigration Department have not replied to requests for information.

Access to the regulations in force remains difficult, and their application depends largely on the immigration officer in post at the time the check or application is made.

Member States continued to observe some challenges in certifying the place of birth of Malaysian citizens, because Malaysian passports in some cases state the territory or the name of the hospital as a place of birth.

*Approved by all Member States present in Malaysia.*



UNION EUROPEENNE

DELEGATION EN REPUBLIQUE DU MALI

23/03/2026

## LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN BAMAKO (MALI) 2025 REPORT

### 1. Introduction

Based on the contributions received, at least five Member States are present in Bamako (Spain, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands). Four Member States are represented for Schengen visa processing purposes (Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Slovakia, represented by the Netherlands).

This report is based on written contributions received from Member States present and/or representing other Member States for the processing of Schengen short-stay visas in Bamako in 2025. In the absence of a complete set of LSC minutes and decisions available to the EU Delegation for the reporting period, the report reflects the information received at the time of drafting.

### 2. LSC meetings held in 2025

No formal LSC meetings were held in Bamako in 2025. Nevertheless, according to the contributions received, visa-related issues were discussed in other coordination formats. Spain indicated that consular meetings allowed exchanges on applications, visas issued, refusals and the possible harmonisation of supporting documents. The Netherlands also referred to one meeting among embassies involved in representation arrangements and to several EU Delegation meetings in which consular issues, security, key figures and fraud were discussed.

Although these exchanges cannot be considered formal LSC meetings as such, they provided some degree of practical coordination on Schengen-related matters during the reporting period.

### 3. State of play

#### 3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Member States reported different levels of preparedness and different practical arrangements for the implementation of the Visa Code in Bamako. Spain and Germany indicated that they do not use an external service provider, while France uses CAPAGO for biometrics and file intake. The Netherlands reported the use of VFS Global Bamako for appointments, biometrics and file intake for ordinary

passport holders, while service and diplomatic passports are processed directly at the embassy. Italy reported BLS Agency as external service provider.

The main practical issues reported in relation to the implementation of the Visa Code concerned appointment waiting times, visa shopping, documentary fraud and difficulties in verifying supporting documents. Spain and Germany reported significant appointment pressure, with waiting times of several months. Spain, Italy and Germany flagged visa shopping as a challenge. France reported an increase in false supporting documents. The Netherlands and Germany reported non-verifiable hotel bookings, fraudulent or inauthentic bank statements in tourism files, and a high refusal rate linked to concerns regarding fraud and/or non-verifiable supporting documents.

Contributions also pointed to specific issues in cases processed under representation arrangements, including fraudulent business invitations and applications involving unaccompanied minors travelling for medical purposes, where concerns were raised regarding parental consent, financial means and the coherence of accommodation and treatment arrangements.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

Work on a harmonised list of supporting documents has not been completed in Bamako. According to the contributions received, the issue was discussed during exchanges in 2025, but no agreed draft list was reported as having been finalised or forwarded for adoption.

In view of the interest expressed during previous exchanges and the practical challenges reported in documentary assessment, Member States may wish to consider whether work on such a list should be relaunched in 2026.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

No specific local MEV cascade was reported as being in force in Bamako in 2025. On the basis of the contributions received, Member States appear to apply the general rules of Article 24(2) of the Visa Code in line with their respective assessment practices.

The figures reported by Member States indicate that multiple-entry visas were issued in 2025, including 800 MEVs by Spain, 603 by Germany, 454 by France and 175 by the Netherlands. However, no common local approach or specific implementing decision on MEV issuance was reported.

The assessment of migration and security risks appears to remain closely linked to practical concerns reported by Member States, including visa shopping, documentary fraud, non-verifiable supporting documents and doubts regarding the actual destination or purpose of travel in certain categories of applications.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Limited elements of harmonisation of practices were reported for 2025. Exchanges took place on visa statistics, fraud trends and the possible harmonisation of supporting documents. In addition, representation arrangements, especially those managed by the Netherlands on behalf of other Member States, provide a degree of practical coordination in visa processing.

At the same time, the contributions received suggest that practices remain only partially harmonised, in particular regarding appointment management, documentary assessment and the handling of specific risk profiles. Further structured work within LSC would therefore be useful in 2026.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

The exchange of information in 2025 appears to have taken place mainly through bilateral channels, in particular email and telephone, rather than through a fully structured LSC framework.

As regards statistics, some Member States reported exchanges of figures on applications lodged, visas issued and refusals. However, no fully consolidated quarterly statistics exchange mechanism was reported for the entire jurisdiction.

Fraud issues featured prominently in the contributions received. Member States referred to false supporting documents, non-verifiable hotel bookings, fraudulent or inauthentic bank statements, fraudulent business invitations and visa shopping patterns.

No specific information was provided on travel medical insurance providers or on problems linked to the implementation of travel medical insurance rules.

Concerning cooperation with local authorities and companies, Member States reported differing experiences. Spain described cooperation as adequate, including through contacts via the Embassy of Mali in Madrid. France and Germany also assessed cooperation as adequate in light of the security context. The Netherlands reported very limited cooperation and response times of approximately 30–45 days for exchanges channelled through protocol or the competent ministry.

Cooperation with external service providers was reported through the use of CAPAGO, VFS Global and BLS Agency, depending on the Member State concerned. The Netherlands identified the quality of service of the external service provider as an area requiring further attention.

VISMail was described as not used or only very rarely used, except in isolated cases involving personal data. No specific operational issue regarding the Visa Information System itself was reported in the contributions received.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

Apart from the exchanges described above, the contributions referred to several meetings organised by the EU Delegation in which consular matters, security, key figures and fraud were discussed. These exchanges may provide a useful basis for relaunching a more structured LSC framework in 2026.

No other specific local initiative was reported as having been formally launched or completed under LSC in 2025.

## **4. Challenges**

No formal 2024 LSC report for Mali was available as a basis for reporting on follow-up to challenges identified in the previous reporting cycle. As a result, no structured follow-up can be reported under this heading.

For the next reporting period, the main subjects to be addressed within LSC in Bamako should include:

- Relaunching regular LSC meetings
- Establishing a quarterly exchange of visa statistics
- Strengthening structured exchanges on fraud trends and visa shopping patterns
- Reviewing operational issues linked to external service providers, including appointment management and service quality
- Assessing whether work on a harmonised list of supporting documents should be relaunched
- Continuing discussions on practical convergence in the issuance of multiple-entry visas, where appropriate and in line with the Visa Code framework.

## **5. Other issues**

France flagged the recognition of AES passports as a relevant issue in 2025. This matter is recorded without further assessment in the absence of additional information in the written contributions received.

In addition, the Netherlands reported concerns in certain applications involving unaccompanied minors travelling for medical purposes under representation arrangements, including questions relating to parental consent, financial means and the coherence of travel documentation.

No other issues of relevance to LSC were specifically reported.



UNION EUROPÉENNE

DELEGATION EN REPUBLIQUE ISLAMIQUE DE MAURITANIE

16/03/2026

## COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC) EN MAURITANIE

### RAPPORT 2025

#### 1. Introduction

**4 Etats Membres (EM) sont présents en Mauritanie, dont 3 avec des sections consulaires** qui délivrent des visas (Allemagne, Espagne et France). L'Espagne dispose également d'un Consulat à Nouadhibou.

Plusieurs EM n'ont pas de représentation diplomatique permanente en Mauritanie mais disposent d'accords de représentation avec les Etats-membres présents pour la délivrance de visas. La France représente ainsi 11 EMUE et 2 Etats membres de l'espace Schengen (Belgique, République Tchèque, Grèce, Estonie, Lettonie, Lituanie, Luxembourg, Hongrie, Malte, Pays-Bas, la Slovénie, Suède, Islande, Suisse) ; après que l'Espagne a cessé de représenter l'Italie, l'Autriche et le Portugal, l'Allemagne assure depuis 1<sup>er</sup> octobre 2025 la représentation de l'Autriche.

Par conséquent, la liste des pays pour lesquels les demandes doivent être déposées auprès de Consulats situés hors de Mauritanie a été étendue : la Bulgarie, le Danemark, l'Italie, le Lichtenstein, la Pologne, le Portugal, la Roumanie, la Slovaquie, la Finlande et la Norvège. Des difficultés d'obtention des visas ont été signalées pour des étudiants devant partir en Italie dans le cadre de programmes Erasmus Plus, ceux-ci n'étant pas en mesure de rester 15 jours au Maroc dans l'attente de la délivrance de leur visa.

#### 2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2025

Trois réunions de coordination Schengen ont été organisées en 2025 à l'initiative de la DUE. Elles se sont tenues en personne, à la DUE. Les réunions LSC sont pilotées par la DUE, au niveau de la Cheffe de la Section Politique, presse et information (PPI) et de l'EMLO.

Les réunions régulières qui se sont tenues en 2025 se sont concentrées sur le partage d'informations (statistiques visa, cas de fraude consulaire, filières d'immigration irrégulière etc.), une procédure harmonisée des visas en cascade, la campagne d'information conjointe sur les visas Schengen, le nouveau document de voyage d'urgence de l'UE ainsi que sur des points d'actualité.

La DUE établit l'ordre du jour des réunions, incluant les contributions des EM. Un système de rotation pour la rédaction des comptes rendu de réunion pourrait utilement être mis en place, mais ce sujet n'a pas été abordé. Les EM participent activement aux réunions LSC.

Le renforcement de la coopération locale Schengen a également été discutée lors de réunions de dialogue politique sur les questions migratoires entre l'UE et ses Etats membres et le Ministère de l'Intérieur mauritanien, alors que la question de la migration légale est l'un des piliers de l'accord de partenariat migratoire signé en mars 2024 entre l'UE et la Mauritanie. À cet égard, une démarche conjointe a été préparée par le LSC, et conduite auprès du Ministère mauritanien de l'Intérieur par les ambassadeurs des EM et de l'UE le 3 novembre.

### **3. État des lieux**

#### **3.1 Application du Code des Visas**

Les EMS appliquent le Code des visas. L'Espagne a externalisé la réception des demandes de visas (société BLS), malgré les problèmes que cela pose.

Le nombre de demandes de **visas Schengen** traitées, en augmentation pendant plusieurs années depuis 2018 (en dépit d'une baisse lors de la période COVID) est désormais de nouveau en augmentation (autour de 25 339 demandes en 2025 et autour de 23 598 en 2024, soit plus 7% environ) mais la répartition entre les 3 consulats a beaucoup évolué au profit de l'Espagne qui traite désormais la grande majorité des demandes :

- Espagne 18 306 demandes, soit 72,2% des demandes
- France : 5 092 demandes, soit 20,1% des demandes
- Allemagne : 1 941 demandes, soit 7,7% des demandes

Le taux de refus moyen pour la Mauritanie est de 33,79% en 2025.

En conséquence de l'augmentation des demandes de visas (en particulier en haute saison, l'été), mais aussi du rôle joué par les officines qui fonctionnent comme intermédiaires en captant et revendant illégalement les créneaux de rendez-vous, plusieurs consulats font régulièrement face à une pénurie de disponibilité de rendez-vous pour la présentation de demande de visas (difficulté qui existe aussi dans d'autres pays de la région). Les délais de traitement de demandes de visa varient également d'un consulat à l'autre (entre une et trois semaines en moyenne).

#### **3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs.**

Déjà harmonisée.

### **3.3 Estimation du besoin d'adapter les règles générales relatives à la délivrance des visas à entrées multiples aux demandeurs en vertu de l'Article 24(2) du Code des Visas (« cascades MEV »)**

En ce qui concerne les MEV, les EMS conviennent de l'utilité du système en cascade, d'ailleurs déjà appliqué. Ils conviennent de l'intérêt d'une harmonisation de cette pratique via l'adoption d'un système en cascade assouplie uniforme et fixe. Les discussions se poursuivront en 2026.

### **3.4 Harmonisation des procédures**

Après l'harmonisation en 2024 des documents requis pour les demandes de visa, un travail a été mené tout au long de l'année 2025 en vue d'harmoniser également les visas MEV. Les échanges d'informations effectués laissent entrevoir la possibilité de parvenir à un accord sur ce sujet courant 2026.

### **3.5. Echange d'informations**

Les échanges d'informations, les réunions de coordination et les échanges directs entre Consulats, conformément au Code des visas, se sont intensifiés entre les trois EM disposant d'une représentation locale. Comme lors des périodes précédentes, ces échanges ont porté sur les domaines suivants :

- Les cas de fraude documentaire
- Les cas de fraude dans l'utilisation de visas et d'identification de falsification de visas.
- Les filières d'immigration clandestine (demandes de groupes avec faux buts de voyage: religieux, sportif, culturel, etc).
- Le manque de fiabilité de certains actes d'état civil, mais également des relevés bancaires.
- La viabilité des sociétés d'assurance de voyage.

## **4. Défis**

Comme l'année précédente, la fraude documentaire et la falsification des documents continuent à constituer un défi important en Mauritanie, bien que celle-ci soit souvent peu sophistiquée. Des cas de fraude et fraude documentaire sont rapportés par rapport aux demandes de visas de toute sorte, court et longue durée (tourisme et affaires, accompagnants, conférences et groupes culturelles, visites familiales, réunification, etc). La nécessité de fiabiliser l'état civil mauritanien, qui ne dispose pas d'un parquet spécialisé sur l'état civil, est également un sujet de préoccupation.

Il est donc important que les États Schengen poursuivent leur approche commune et coordonnée dans la lutte contre la fraude documentaire et la falsification de documents.

La campagne de communication conjointe UE-Mauritanie relative aux visas Schengen a incontestablement constitué une étape majeure en matière de coordination. Financée par la DG-HOME, cette initiative s'est déroulée de février à octobre et a été prolongée jusqu'en 2026, selon des modalités encore à définir à l'heure actuelle.

## **5. Divers**

RAS.

Le rapport a été approuvé par les EM représentés localement.



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN MONGOLIA  
2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

7 Member States are present in Ulaanbaatar – figure has not changed from 2024. BG now delivers visas (from May 2025)

Update on representation

- CZ: Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Sweden and Switzerland
- FR: Netherland and Monaco
- DE: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain
- PL: only Poland
- BG: Bulgaria only and only C visa (D need to go to China)
- IT: Italy only
- HU: Hungary only

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

*We had only one meeting in 202. It was organised on 23/11/2025 in the premises of the EU Delegation and chaired by the EU Delegation. No meeting was organised in the first part of the year, as expatriate consular staff had left in several missions and not been replaced. Also, the Political section of the Delegation was gravely understaffed due to the departure and non-replacement of two staff out of four, one of them being the consular correspondent backup.*

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

*In 2025, all EUMS present in Mongolia carried out their tasks under LSC's Visa Code normally. Applications have continued to increase.*

*Schengen visa – refusal rate and profile of applicants*

- *FR: 20% refusal rate – all kinds of applicants – few multiple entry visas*
- *IT: 5% refusal – many applications by students and scholars*
- *DE: 10% refusal rate – significant number of multiple entry visas delivered*
- *HU: 5% refusal rate - mainly tourists, family members and students*
- *PL: 9% refusal rate for C and 28% for D – 5% applications for multiple entry*
- *CZ: refusal rate 31% - many family visits; note that quality of applicants has improved*
- *BG: mainly tourists and family members*

*Many Mongolian applicants seem used to visa shopping and overstays. DE, HU and CZ flag cases of asylum applications.*

*The regime applicable to Mongolian diplomatic passports varies: NL (represented by FR) requests visa, for FR no visa is needed, for CZ and HU no visa for diplomatic and service passports.*

*There is a consensus that Mongolia remains a migratory risk country. The claimed purpose of the visit is not always the actual one. Fake tourism is one of the frequent scenarios. People tend to borrow money from brokers to show greater savings on their accounts. There were also registered cases of fake electronic statements and fake certificates of employment. Sometimes there is fake information on genuine documents. Hotel reservations are frequently missing.*

*The medical insurance coverage requirement continues to vary, as do the payment method and currency of application fees.*

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

MS do not see a further need to harmonize formally the list of supporting documents since they consider that harmonization in practice already exists, although they acknowledge that some there are variations concerning information requested from the applicants. MS are however interested to exchange information on health coverage requirements.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

*Multiple entry visas are rare for some Member States but more common for others like DE. MS agree that harmonization in the cascade standards is not feasible.*

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

*There were no other initiatives taken in 2025 to ensure harmonisation of practices.*

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

*Except CZ and despite regular reminders by the Delegation, several Member States do not send quarterly statistics. During the latest LSC meeting, all Member States agreed that an exchange on travel medical insurance companies recognised for Mongolian applicants should take place on a regular basis. The cooperation with local authorities was correct in 2025.*

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

## **4. Challenges**

In 2025, the lack of human resources within the EUDEL and within some of the seven Member States Missions in Ulaanbaatar was a major issue for organising LSC meetings. The colleague in charge of the file (among many others) left the Delegation at the end of 2024 and was not replaced until February 2026. In addition, the departure of another member of the PPI section without a replacement until April 2026, obliged the head of section to cover an important number of issues. From April 2026, the PPI section is again complete, so that LSC will be organised on a regular basis, starting from May 2026.

## **5. Other issues**



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO MEXICO**

## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN MEXICO**

### **2025 REPORT**

#### **1. Introduction**

The Delegation of the European Union to Mexico is responsible for the organisation, chairing and follow-up of Local Schengen Cooperation meetings. The LSC group in Mexico consists of 18 Schengen countries that are EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, FI, FR, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, and Sweden), as well as Norway and Switzerland. These have embassies in Mexico City, with Spain additionally having a consulate in Guadalajara and both France and Spain having one in Monterrey. All the countries have honorary consuls across the country, and the unrepresented Member States (Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, and Slovenia) have at least one honorary consul in Mexico as well.

Member States have made some local cooperation arrangements regarding processing visas. Austria additionally represents Malta; Belgium represents Luxembourg and Slovenia; Denmark represents Sweden, Norway, and Iceland; Spain represents Estonia and due to works at the Hungarian embassy, temporarily also Hungary; Slovakia represents Latvia; and Switzerland represents Liechtenstein.

Since Lithuania has neither a representation arrangement nor consulates in Mexico, applicants for Schengen visas have to apply at the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington D.C.

#### **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

LSC group meetings are generally run back-to-back with the LCC meetings. In 2025, the LSC Group held three regular meetings in March, June, and October, and one ad hoc meeting in June.

Coordination of the LSC remained very positive through the exchange of information on the consular WhatsApp group, which continued to be very active and efficient. EUDEL shares the LSC meeting reports with the MS locally.

Outside the capital city, only ES and FR maintain professional consular representations (see above). For this reason, there are no additional regional LSC groups in Mexico.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Due to the EU-Mexico tourist visa waiver agreement (VWA), Mexican nationals are exempted from Schengen visas. Therefore, the number of Schengen visa applications in Mexico (by third country nationals only) is limited. The Member States issued more than 2,400 Schengen visas in 2025 (about 40% of which are MEVs), with a refusal rate of less than 5%.

Concerning the cost of Schengen visas, MS apply different exchange rates and update them with different regularity, according to instructions from their capitals. It is therefore impossible to have one uniform visa fee in the local currency. However, the differences in fees for Schengen visas are relatively minor and do not lead to visa shopping.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The harmonised list of supporting documents was adopted by the LSC in 2019, and its implementation has not encountered any major difficulties so far.

#### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

In 2020, the EUDEL had updated participants on Schengen-related information, recalling that the revised Visa Code came into force on 2 February 2020, and that the revised Handbook became applicable as of 25 March 2020. No discussions took place in 2025 on ensuring a harmonised application of Multiple Entry Visas at the local level to prevent forum shopping.

#### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

No other initiatives taken to ensure harmonisation of practices.

#### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Continuing the practice established in 2022, the WhatsApp group consisting of the MS consuls and the main airlines operating flights between Europe and Mexico remained active. This allowed the exchange of information to facilitate the airlines' work in case of discrepancies among Member States in the way they interpret requirements for entering the Schengen area. The chat group served as an important platform to solve issues related to entry into the EU.

#### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

No other initiatives taken.

#### **4. Challenges**

Misinformation regarding the implications of the ETIAS roll-out is problematic and could negatively affect the perception of the EU in Mexico. EUDEL has informed MS about the spread of misinformation concerning an alleged visa requirement for Mexicans, which most likely stemmed from a website ([www.etiasvisa.com](http://www.etiasvisa.com)) that fraudulently presents itself as communicating the official EU position. The Mexican media has made references to it. EUDEL has actively sought to counter this misinformation through a dedicated campaign including numerous interviews by the HoD over the last few years. Changes in the roll-out date of ETIAS risk creating further uncertainty but the EUDEL has been active and constant in communicating on the matter through social media in order to prevent the spread of disinformation. Non-Schengen Member States, like Ireland, have regularly communicated about the difficulties they face due to Mexico's consideration of ETIAS as an EU harmonised tool.

A challenge often presented by some Member States is the compatibility of long-term visas with short-term stays. A frequent case is when Mexican students with national, long-term visas travel to Europe before this visa is in force, which they can do as Mexicans are exempted visas for short-term stays. Some border agents thereafter fail to recognise the compatibility of having a short-term visa-free stay back-to-back with a long-term stay.

#### **5. Other issues**

A recurrent concern for Member States involves the timeline and communication of the future ETIAS system. Some Member States have raised concerns that the cost of Schengen visas is not uniform across all Member States and have suggested that they be updated more often.



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO THE STATE OF MONTENEGRO**

## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN MONTENEGRO**

### **2025 REPORT**

#### **1. Introduction**

Currently, 14 EU MS Embassies (AT, BG, CZ, DE, ES, FR, GR, HR, HU, IT, PL, RO, SI, SK), one Consul-General (HR in Kotor's consulate) and seven Honorary Consuls representing 10 EU MS (AT, BG, DK/SE, ES, FI, HU, NL, RO, SI) are present in Montenegro.

The Common Application Centre Podgorica (CAC) continues to function within the structure of the Embassy of Slovenia and provide support to 13 EU MS (AT, BE, DK, EE, ES, FR, HU, LT, LU, LV, NL, SI, SK).

#### **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

In 2025, Local Schengen Group meeting took place in June. The meeting was organised by the EU Delegation in a hybrid way and chaired by the EUD Consular Correspondent. The LSC meeting was well attended, with non-resident EU MS attending the meeting via Webex. Minutes were prepared by the EUD and distributed to the participants.

#### **3. State of play**

##### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Most EU MS guarantee an appointment for Schengen Visa within 7-15 days. Three countries take on average from two to seven weeks.

Some MS highlighted the problem of visa shopping, where applicants book an appointment in one EU Embassy and then do not show up because received an earlier appointment in another EU MS Consular Service.

The verification of territorial competence also poses a challenge to some EU MS, especially of Russian nationals. MNE may be seen a convenient short-term hub for the sole purpose of launching short- and particularly long-term visa applications. Third country nationals may also create shell companies or let themselves employ by such on minimum wage basis or have procured real estate for the sole purpose of obtaining a Montenegrin resident permit, while their financial situation is in fact still to be in their respective (third) country of origin.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

At the last LSC meeting, one MS submitted three types of checklists of draft harmonized supporting documents for Schengen or National visas applications relating to the purpose of the stay. This list needs to be agreed by MS.

Some MS consider that harmonization is already acquired at a satisfactory level.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

Most MS foreseen the possibility to grant visa under the cascade system. When it comes to Russian nationals residing in MNE, the majority of LSC countries do not grant or have not granted multi-annual visa in 2025. Few countries, however, foreseen it as possible on a case-to-case basis, or because of family ties in the EU MS.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Information-sharing is ongoing in the context of the LSC periodic meetings organised by the EU Delegation and in bilateral contacts with the other Embassies that issue visas in Montenegro.

#### **Exchange of information**

EU MS reported varied trends in visa applications and processing for 2025. While some MS observed increases in applications, others noted declines, particularly in short-stay (Type C) visas. Three MS noted prevalence of Turkish and Russia applicants for C-type visas. Other predominant nationalities include Belarussians and Azeris. Refusal rates ranged from 1.4% to 20%.

Most MS do not accept travel insurance policies from Russian providers, deeming them non-compliant with existing EU sanctions. Most MS reported no significant cases of fraud or forged documents.

LSC countries usage of the VISMail and the Visa Information System is not uniform. Some MS use these tools regularly; others employ them as needed or supplement them with direct email communication between embassies.

As regards cooperation with external services providers, most MS reported that they do not cooperate with external service providers, but cooperates with Police Directorate, insurances, travel agencies, banks and employers, with mixed results. No MS reported collaboration with external service providers for visa processing. One MS called for a common EU approach on rejecting Russian-issued insurance policies and financial documents (e.g., bank accounts/statements), under Article 14 of the Visa Code.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

EU MS invited the representatives of the Border Police who informed on the latest developments regarding the border security system, detection and suppression of various travel document fraud and the new amendments to the Law on Foreigners. They also gave an overview of borders management in Montenegro.

EU MS discussed three types of checklists of draft harmonized supporting documents for Schengen or National visas applications relating to the purpose of the stay, for: Visiting relatives or friends, Tourism and Business. The lists were distributed to participants for review, potential standardization, and agreement.

### **4. Challenges**

EU MS reported on the increased email inflow and pressure from transportation companies, following entry into force of EES. These concerns relate to the possible long-term visa applications for truck drivers in to avoid falling under the 90/180-day rule.

### **5. Other issues**

The EU Delegation and the EU MS communicate on consular cooperation issues through a Viber group, which also exchanges information on visa and general consular issues.

***\*The report has been approved by all Member States present in Montenegro.***

Rabat, le 27 février 2026



**UNION EUROPEENNE**  
**DELEGATION AUPRES DU ROYAUME DU MAROC**

**COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET  
LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC) AUPRES DU ROYAUME DU MAROC**

**RAPPORT 2025**

**1. Introduction**

20 Etats membres de l'espace Schengen ont une présence diplomatique/consulaire au Maroc: AT (Rabat), BE (Rabat), BG (Rabat), CH (Rabat), CZ (Rabat), DE (Rabat), DK (Rabat), EL (Rabat), ES (Agadir, Casablanca, Nador, Rabat, Tanger et Tétouan), FI (Rabat), FR (Agadir, Casablanca, Fès, Marrakech, Rabat et Tanger mais les demandes de visa sont uniquement traitées à Rabat et Casablanca), HR (Rabat), HU (Rabat), IT (Rabat, Casablanca), MT (Casablanca), NL (Rabat), NO (Rabat), PL (Rabat), PT (Rabat), RO (Rabat), SE (Rabat), SI (Rabat).

IE (Rabat) participe aussi aux réunions de GLS comme observateurs.

**Accords de représentation pour les questions de visa :**

AT et BE représentent respectivement SK et LU.

DE représente LV et LT.

DK représente NO.

FR représente EE.

HU assure l'octroi de visa court séjour de SI.

SE représente IS.

FI et CZ reçoivent et traitent également les demandes de visa des ressortissants mauritaniens.

## **Recours aux prestataires de service extérieurs pour la réception des demandes de visa :**

AT, FI, HR, DK/NO, IT, MT, NL et SE utilisent les services de VFS Global; DE, BE, FR utilisent les services de TLS Contact ; ES et PT recourent aux services du prestataire BLS.

### **2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2025**

**4 réunions ordinaires** ont été organisées pendant la période de référence (en février, mai, septembre et décembre 2025), toutes en présentiel. La participation aux réunions des Etats membres représentés au Maroc est élevée.

La coordination des réunions LSC est assurée par la Délégation de l'UE au Maroc. Les rapports des réunions LSC sont établis par la Délégation, avec des contributions des membres du groupe LSC. Ils sont ensuite partagés avec les missions diplomatiques des Etats membres, qui les communiquent à leur capitale.

Les consulats des Etats membres en dehors de Rabat reçoivent les rapports et les conclusions des réunions LSC à travers leurs missions diplomatiques à Rabat et/ou directement de la Délégation de l'UE.

### **3. Etat des lieux**

#### **3.1 Application du Code des visas**

En 2025 les déplacements internationaux vers l'espace Schengen ont continué à croître.

Les demandes de visas ont, pour certains consulats, atteint des niveaux qui dépassent la période pré-COVID. Face à cet afflux de demandes, les problèmes de capacité ont entraîné de longs retards pour l'obtention des entretiens pour certains groupes de voyageurs (tourisme, primo demandeurs). Le taux de refus semble similaire par rapport à la situation en 2024 (néanmoins, les chiffres officiels ne sont pas pour le moment disponibles).

Les missions diplomatiques des Etats membres et la Délégation de l'UE ont activement collaboré dans le cadre de la coopération consulaire au titre de Schengen, en conformité avec les dispositions du Code des visas. Pendant la période de référence, l'activité de coopération a été axée principalement sur l'échange d'informations concernant :

- les problèmes de capacité et les délais de rendez-vous/décisions relatives aux demandes ;
- l'analyse du risque en matière d'immigration et de sécurité y compris dans les situations très particulières (adolescents délaissés sur le territoire Schengen etc.)

- les signalements dans le système SIS, d'autres échanges d'informations (signalements/ alertes) entre les consulats concernant les demandeurs de visa, la protection des données personnelles des demandeurs de visa ;
- introduction du Entry Exit System (EES)

Spécificités locales :

- Le manque de ressources humaines entraîne de longues attentes pour les RDV. Néanmoins, les problèmes de « visa shopping » se sont stabilisés.
- Le rôle des intermédiaires utilisés par les demandeurs de visa a été contré par différentes mesures. La France une vérification par téléphone des identités des demandeurs primo.
- Les Etats membres ont constaté une recrudescence d'utilisation des documents frauduleux.
- Vu la proximité physique avec le territoire de l'EU, introduction du EES a entraîné des situations particulières surtout liées aux chauffeurs routiers professionnels.

### **3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs**

Dans la première partie de l'année, ensemble des consulats des Etats membres au Maroc a mis en œuvre la décision d'exécution C(2019)5432 modifiant la décision d'exécution C(2015)6940 en ce qui concerne le titre et la liste des documents justificatifs devant être produits au Maroc par les demandeurs de visa de court séjour. En juillet, la décision d'exécution de C(2025) 4379 a été adoptée par la Commission européenne suivant une proposition du LSC et ajoutant les documents prouvant un lien parental.

### **3.3 Estimation du besoin d'adapter les règles générales relatives à la délivrance des visas à entrées multiples aux demandeurs en vertu de l'Article 24(2) du Code des visas (« cascades MEV »)**

En général, la disposition de l'Article 24(2) existante est globalement respectée.

Le sujet de l'adaptation éventuelle au niveau local des règles générales a été discuté à plusieurs reprises. Une nouvelle proposition de cascade accélérée a été abordée à la dernière réunion LSC de 2025 et les Etats membres continuerons y prêter attention en 2026.

### **3.4 Harmonisation des procédures, échanges d'informations**

L'échange d'informations entre les membres du LSC se déroule à l'occasion des réunions de coordination et/ou via e-mail/VISmail. Les membres de LSC échangent régulièrement et/ou sur base ad-hoc, en fonction des besoins, sur les suspicions de fraude et d'utilisation de faux documents et le fonctionnement du système VIS.

L'utilisation du VISmail par les membres du LSC reste sous-optimale. L'importance d'utiliser ce système pour les échanges entre les consulats (plutôt que WhatsApp ou e-mail) a été rappelée à plusieurs reprises lors des réunions de coordination.

#### **4. Défis**

##### **Réponses apportées aux défis mentionnés dans le rapport 2024**

*Le groupe a continué à échanger/améliorer les outils pour réduire les aspects négatifs liés aux actions des intermédiaires, initiatives spécifiques des Etats Schengen (FR).*

*La nouvelle liste harmonisée avec l'ajout des documents prouvant le lien de parenté a été adoptée.*

##### **Points à traiter au cours du prochain exercice (2026)**

*Continuation de l'échange d'informations et d'expériences et recherche de solutions afin d'améliorer les systèmes de prise de rendez-vous et éviter au maximum les abus des intermédiaires.*

*Continuation de l'échange d'informations et d'expériences concernant les documents frauduleux comme relevés bancaires, contrats de travail, réservations, certificats de mariage, invitation de partenaires commerciaux etc.*

*Continuer les discussions sur des possibilités d'une cascade accélérée.*

#### **5. Divers**

Ce rapport a été approuvé par tous les États membres présents au Maroc.



25/02/2026

## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN MOZAMBIQUE**

### **2025 REPORT**

#### **1. Introduction**

24 EU Member States (MS) are accredited to Mozambique and 11 have a diplomatic mission in Maputo [AT, BE, DE, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, NL, PT, SE] alongside two other non-EU Schengen States [CH and NO]. PT counts two General Consulates: one in the capital Maputo, the other one in the central city of Beira.

#### **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

Three regular meetings of the Local Schengen Coordination group took place in 2025 (March, July, September) and an *ad hoc* meeting was convened in November with a high-level representative of the National Migration Service (*Serviço Nacional de Migração* – SENAMI) in attendance. The sessions were chaired by the EU Delegation (EUDEL) and were overall well attended, with participation generally consistent, albeit varying occasionally among members. Non-resident EU Member States are frequently invited to participate, logistics permitting. Whereas the hybrid format has often enabled their virtual attendance, participation has remained limited. The EUDEL systematically drafts minutes of the meetings which are subsequently shared with the LSC group and non-resident EU Member States.

Discussions throughout the year focused in particular on heightened crisis preparedness, notably in light of the post-electoral turmoil following the October 2024 general elections, information-sharing and efforts to coordinate travel advice among LSC members, implementation of new EU instruments (notably the EU Emergency Travel Document and the Entry/Exit System), as well as recurrent migration-related issues for travellers, including the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) regime (a legally foreseen online pre-registration to be completed prior to travel by nationals of 29 visa-exempt countries under Decree No. 10/2023). Engagement with SENAMI was strengthened with a view to improving communication, legal clarity and predictability for EU citizens.

Throughout the year, steady coordination and timely exchange of information were also ensured via messaging applications. A dedicated group was established on Signal to complement the existing WhatsApp group, which continues to serve as the primary channel for day-to-day communication.

Due to the limited number of resident EU MS, Local Consular Cooperation (LCC) and LSC meetings have systematically been held together with a view to create synergies and ensure consistency in the work of the two largely overlapping groups.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

EU MS are generally well prepared to implement procedures and ensure the safeguarding of conditions set out under the Visa Code, even though in most embassies, the staff in charge of consular affairs also covers a number of other files (e.g. Head of administration, security, cultural affairs, etc.).

Out of the 11 EU MS resident in Mozambique, seven issue Schengen visas [DE, ES, FI, FR, IT, NL, PT], including on behalf of other EU MS [e.g. short-term Schengen visas for BE are issued by the NL, whereas long-term visas are issued by the BE Embassy in Pretoria]. The LSC has fostered regular information-sharing on local trends and cooperation in carrying out the tasks foreseen in the Visa Code, including harmonised application of the Visa Code provisions and implementation of the Visa Information System (VIS).

No structural problems have been identified with regard to appointment waiting times or cooperation with external service providers, which function overall in line with contractual and legal requirements. No particular issues have been reported, except for the continued increase in the number of forged documents submitted to support visa requests. Falsified documentation e.g. *inter alia* bank statements, insurance certificates and employment records have thus continued to be a challenge in 2025.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The LSC group in Mozambique harmonised its list of documents supporting visa applications following the adoption of the Commission Implementing Decision of 4 September 2014 (which established the list of supporting documents to be presented by visa applicants in a number of countries, including Mozambique). All EU MS agreed to start applying the decision from 15 September 2014. During the reporting period, no amendments to the list of supporting documents were deemed necessary by the LSC group. The harmonised list continues to be applied consistently by all issuing Member States, and local circumstances do not warrant specific changes.

#### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

No issue has been reported by LSC members. No specific trends requiring deviation from the default cascade were identified during the reporting period.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

No specific additional measure of harmonisation of practices is currently being envisaged.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Regular exchange of information has continued to be encouraged among the LSC group, namely on: (i) visa-related statistics, based not only on the yearly official statistics but also quarterly whenever possible (ii) emerging trends regarding possible instances of migratory risk or visa fraud patterns (iii) the general VIS functioning and (iv) best practices and relevant operational experiences.

As regards the use of VIS Mail, all consular services have been using it since 20 January 2020 for the exchange of personal data of visa applicants, even though in some cases the function is managed at capital level.

In relation to visa statistics, taking all types of visas together, EU MS observed a steady increase in visa requests since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic-related travel restrictions. However, the post-electoral turmoil following the October 2024 general elections, which continued to affect the country at the beginning of 2025, had a noticeable impact on mobility patterns and visa demand.

Following the tensions surrounding the most recent elections, at least one EU Member State reported an increase in asylum applications, in particular by third-country nationals but also by Mozambican nationals. Such cases are generally referred to either UNHCR or OHCHR, as appropriate depending on the nationality concerned.

Isolated instances of fraud continued to be detected. A continuous increase in forged or falsified supporting documents (notably bank statements, insurance certificates and employment records) was also observed. In the case of one Member State, an increase was observed in applications for family reunification visas submitted by Somali nationals temporarily present in Mozambique (40 applications in 2025 compared to 20 in 2024). In almost all cases, applicants presented a document purporting to prove their legal stay in Mozambique, which upon verification proved to be falsified. Consequently, the applications concerned were refused.

No particular issues were reported regarding travel medical insurances or the implementation of related rules. Some practical challenges were, however, noted in cooperation with local banks, in the context of restrictions affecting Mozambique's banking sector following its listing by the FATF as a country under increased monitoring. Mozambique was subsequently removed from the FATF "grey list" in October 2025, although some of the practical effects of the earlier restrictions continued to be felt during the reporting period.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

Following the positive experience of the October 2023 session, DE organised a further training at the beginning of 2025 on the identification of forged and falsified documents, delivered by an expert of the Federal Police. The session, open to EU Member States and like-minded partners, was well received by participants, who considered it highly relevant for their daily consular work, in particular in the context of visa processing and the detection of fraudulent supporting documents. It was noted that forgery techniques are becoming increasingly professional and sophisticated, requiring significantly greater scrutiny and expertise to detect, especially in the case of bank statements and other financial supporting documents.

## **4. Challenges**

The reporting period was marked by post-electoral unrest following the October 2024 general elections which only gradually started to fade at the beginning of 2025. The situation nonetheless required enhanced coordination within the LSC, notably as regards the exchange of information, alignment of travel advice messaging and mutual updates among resident and non-resident Member States.

Particular attention was given to ensuring adequate information flows to non-resident Embassies and unrepresented EU Member States, as well as to reviewing existing communication channels and contingency arrangements. In light of the lessons identified, the LSC updated the existing Joint Crisis Preparedness Framework for Mozambique in the course of 2025, with a view to reinforcing overall preparedness.

## **5. Other issues**

This annual report was drafted by the LSC Chair (EU Delegation) and approved by LSC members.



LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN MYANMAR  
2025 REPORT

**1. Introduction**

Nine (9) Member States (MS) currently have resident Embassies/official (non-honorary) representations in Myanmar (Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden). Non-MS Norway and Switzerland also have resident diplomatic missions in Yangon.

Four (4) MS - **France, Germany, Italy**, and the **Netherlands** - issue Schengen visas in Myanmar. For visa purposes, apart from their own countries:

- **FR** represents CH, CZ, ES, LV and PT
- **DE** represents AT, BE, DK, FI, EL, HU, LU and IS
- **IT** represents MT and SI

Four EU MS (**DK, FI, NL, SE**) announced the **closure of their diplomatic missions** in Yangon throughout 2026, with FI having closed its mission on 28.02.26. Of the four, only NL is a visa-issuing MS in Yangon. NL informed partners that it would be looking to engage in a visa representation agreement after the closure of the mission, a date for which is not yet formally set.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

Two LSC meetings took place in the reporting period, on 19 February and 19 September, 2025, although visa-related issues are also sometimes addressed at EU Political Counselor meetings throughout the year as well as at the broader in-person Consular Corps and Management meetings held three times a year with like-minded partners in Yangon.

The EU Delegation organized and chaired the meetings, and prepared and shared the minutes. The meetings were well-attended, including online participation of several non-resident missions, mostly based in Thailand. No other *ad hoc* meetings took place.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Embassies and the EU Delegation are prepared to ensure tasks required by the Visa Code. MS did not highlight any problems related to its implementation. Waiting times for appointments are considered to be within the guidelines.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

A consultation on harmonization of supporting documents among MS issuing Schengen visas in Yangon was carried out in March 2025, to reduce the possibility of visa shopping. It was assessed that harmonization is complete.

#### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

MS have adapted to the general rules for issuing MEV.

#### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Practices related to the application of the EU sanctions regime requirements (106 Myanmar individuals currently listed) and exceptional granting of Schengen visas for sanctioned individuals – for example to attend hearings of the International Court of Justice – is a specific topic of interest in the case of Myanmar.

#### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Monthly statistics for Schengen applications in Yangon range between 100 and 350 Schengen visas per emitting resident mission. For some missions, a high number of applications relate to seafarers.

Most non-resident missions have one of the four visa-issuing MS representing them for Schengen visa purposes in Yangon (see representation agreements above). Those who issue their own visas (from Bangkok, mainly) report of very low numbers of applications, in some cases single digits, with very high refusal rates. Some countries note an increase in student visa applications (which fall under the national visa category).

During the reporting period, refusal rates in Yangon ranged anywhere between 8% and 40%, depending on the mission, a marked increase from the around 5% refusal rate pre-coup and pre-COVID. This is representative of the increase in Myanmar citizens, especially young people, wanting to leave the country. Non-resident missions who issue visas for Myanmar nationals –mainly Bangkok-based– also report high refusal rates.

There is no closed list of insurance providers. The national Myanmar Insurance is *not* accepted as it excludes repatriation, which is a requirement under the Visa Code.

Several MS report a growing issue of fraudulent documents. This includes fraud concerning bank statements, housing documents, flight bookings, and reports of illicitly legalized documents – where the applicant was never in possession of the original. This raises questions as to whether authorities in Myanmar correctly notarize documents.

Two MS cooperate with external service providers (both use VFS). They do not report issues.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

None.

## **4. Challenges**

The political and security situation remains highly volatile in the country and continues to require monitoring and a sustained exchange of information, though this affects the LCC more than the LSC working group.

## **5. Other issues**

No other issues of importance raised.

*EU MS validated this report in February 2026*



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE STATE OF NAMIBIA

## LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN NAMIBIA

### 2025 REPORT

#### 1. Introduction

Five Member States have Embassies in Namibia: Germany, Spain, France, Portugal and Finland. Belgium plans to open an Embassy in 2027 covering full diplomatic and Consular/Visa services for Namibia and Botswana. Three of the resident MS (DE, ES, FI) issue Schengen Visas in Windhoek. They also represent the following Schengen Countries:

- *Germany* represents Belgium, Switzerland, Hungary, Luxemburg, Malta, and The Netherlands
- *Spain* represents Portugal and Slovenia.
- *Finland* represents Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Norway, Sweden as well as Czechia (Czechia since 2025).

France has started issuing their own Schengen Visas in 2025 via the French Embassy in Pretoria, South Africa. They use a service provider, Capago, for pre-processing of visa applications (data and document collection as well as distribution), which won the regional tender. However, Capago has not yet established a local office in Namibia and operates with visiting employees from its South African base to Namibia on a monthly basis. Negotiations are ongoing to reduce their fee.

Austria has started issuing their own Schengen visas in 2025 via a local service provider, VFS and their Embassies in Pretoria, South Africa. Croatia follows the same practice and also uses VFS.

Germany has started using a local service provider, TLS, to pre-process visa applications for all the countries it represents.

Finland is planning to outsource pre-processing to a local service provider in 2026.

The following countries have no Schengen visa representation in Namibia: Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia. In addition, Cyprus and Ireland, as non-Schengen EU Member States, also do not have visa representation in Namibia.

## **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

In 2025, three LSC meetings were held on February 19, May 20 and September 12. All were chaired by the EUD and held in a hybrid format with some non-resident MS attending. The EUD shared minutes with the Local Schengen Coordination group and HQ colleagues in DG Migration and Home Affairs. For 2026, the LCS plans to invite also non-EU Schengen Members, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland to attend the meetings remotely.

## **3. State of play**

### **3.1. Application of the Visa Code**

Most resident MS assess the “unification” of their work under the VISA Code as rather advanced, and increasingly formalised (see below). In general, no major problems relating to the implementation of the Visa Code have been identified. However, some divergence in its implementation (e.g. length of visa granted, cascade application, types of forms of consent accepted) are noticeable between Member States.

In 2025 there have been reports that visa applications of non-EU/Schengen family members of EU citizens are not being processed quickly enough. Exceptionally high demand and capacity constraints at certain consulates contribute to these delays. In some cases, the fact that the consulates are not located in Windhoek further complicates matters. These factors make it difficult to consistently comply with Article 5(2) of Directive 2004/38/EC, which requires that such applications be processed and granted as soon as possible and under an accelerated procedure.

### **3.2. Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The resident MS have submitted a proposal for the harmonisation of the list of supporting documents to the VISA Committee in October 2025. Following the meeting of the Visa Committee on the 9. December 2025, some changes and clarifications were requested and the LSC is working on finalising the harmonised document list. Formal adoption by the Visa Committee is scheduled for 2026.

### **3.3. Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code (‘MEV cascades’)**

Multi-Entry Visas, especially those applications handled by DE, represent a relatively high number of applications. They are considered an important way to unburden the visa section by avoiding a multitude of single visa applications. LSC discussed the topic of multiple-entry visas in 2025 to compare the practices of the LSC group in Namibia. EUD checked the harmonisation of multiple-entry visas with DG HOME, and whether there are any best practices from other countries. DG HOME advised first assessing whether the default visa cascade in Article 24 of the Visa Code is suitable for Namibia. Only if not, should a local adaptation be considered. They provided a template and an example from India. Any proposal would require LSC agreement, Visa Committee approval, and formal Commission adoption. This topic will be further investigated in 2026.

Namibian applicants are very seldom refused MEV cascades, as they generally have a strong record of complying with visa rules and a low propensity for irregular migration. Consequently, security and migration considerations only rarely constitute grounds for refusing an MEV cascade.

### **3.4. Harmonisation of practices**

In 2025, the LSC discussed the potential of publishing a Schengen visa information sheet. It will contain an annex with an easy guide on where people can apply for Visas for each Schengen country as well as the respective local service providers. As the situation is still changing as regards possible local service providers (see above), the LSC will go forward with the information sheet when a stable situation is reached in 2026.

### **3.5. Exchange of information**

Statistics are shared at a quarterly basis by DE, and on a monthly basis by FI and ES. Exchange of information on cases of fraud, travel medical insurance, cooperation with local authorities and companies, external service providers, and the use of VISMail has been conducted *ad hoc*. Cases of fraud and fraudulent documents have been rare, with a few fake IDs easily spotted. The LSC has setup a central repository for copies of detected fraudulent documents to circulate between MS and share experience. EUD will follow up on its implementation.

With the increased use of external service providers, LSC will exchange information on its individual MS experience with the various companies.

No issues were reported on:

- Travel medical insurance (TMI) offerings and implementation in Namibia;
- cooperation with and companies

### **3.6. Any other initiative taken in LSC**

n/a

## **4. Challenges**

In the beginning of 2025, Germany continued experiencing challenges with the growing number of Schengen visa applications for Germany, as well as for other Schengen countries it represents. However, since it has handed over data collection to a local service provider, DE reports reduced processing bottlenecks, with all types of passports (incl. diplomatic).

The period of intense negative media coverage has come to an end, as performance and service levels have improved.

*Spain* and *Finland* do not face the same issue of incomplete applications but receive significantly fewer applications than Germany. However, with France now going through a private service provider which does not have a permanent basis in Windhoek, Spain and Finland have increasingly been supporting urgent applications to ensure timely visa issuance. Moreover, France is currently negotiating with its external service provider to reduce the servicing fee charged to applicants. The objective is to bring France's Schengen visa practice into closer alignment with the requirements of Article 17(4), (4a) and (4b) of the Schengen Visa Code.

The LSC has to note that cooperation with Namibian authorities, i.e. Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety & Security, is difficult. So far, no meeting of LSC could be setup to discuss persisting issues and to date we have not yet been able to obtain reference specimen to share with LSC to check document authenticity. Continued engagement of Namibian Authorities by LSC will continue in 2026.

Member States have raised concerns about possible visa shopping in Namibia. The LSC will monitor this issue and follow-up in 2026.

## **5. Other issues**

n/a



27/2/2026

## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN NEPAL**

### **2025 REPORT**

#### **1. Introduction**

Three EU Member States (DE, FR, FI) are present (24 are represented from India). Norway and Switzerland also participate.

#### **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

LSC meetings are held back-to-back with LCC meetings on a quarterly basis, due to the low number of local representations and the similarity in membership. Meetings are generally well attended by all local representatives and chaired on a rotating basis. Hybrid LCC meetings are held on a regular basis, with minutes drawn up by EUD and MS.

#### **3. State of play**

##### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Member states report no major challenges. One MS cooperates with a service provider as do many other Schengen states in Kathmandu. Waiting times for appointments mostly within one-two weeks. Number of applications has decreased from previous year. Other MS do not use an external service provider, and waiting times for appointments is currently around three weeks. Online appointment system for one MS was recently compromised by malware and appointments are being given out manually since autumn 2025.

##### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

Harmonising of the supporting documents has been discussed but not officially agreed.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

Member states follow Visa Code cascade. Cascades subject to local discussion.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Harmonisation regularly discussed in various meetings with resident MS.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Member states regularly exchange information through e-mails and meetings.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

One MS discovered fraudulent travel health insurance certificates issued by various local visa agencies. Criminal proceedings were initiated, and Schengen partners were informed.

## **4. Challenges**

Some consultant service providers and travel agencies are reportedly engaged in questionable activities.

## **5. Other issues**

MS suggest intensifying cooperation and information exchange on visa and document fraud beyond Schengen scope and to further engage Government of Nepal.



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO THE STATE OF NIGERIA**

**LOCAL SCHENGEN AND CONSULAR COOPERATION (LSC) IN ABUJA**

**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

Nineteen EU MS (AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, DK, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, NL, PT, PL, RO, SE, SK) and two Schengen countries (CH, NO) have embassies in Abuja. There are seven EU MS Consulates General in Lagos (BE, DE, DK, ES, FR, IT, NL) + Consulate General of Switzerland. The majority of visas are being issued in Lagos.

**Schengen visa representation:**

<b>Arrangement with represented Member State</b>	<b>Unrepresented Member State</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	Luxembourg
<b>Finland</b>	Estonia
<b>Hungary</b>	Slovenia
<b>Italy</b>	Malta
<b>Sweden</b>	Iceland
<b>Switzerland</b>	Liechtenstein

In the reporting period, the EU Delegation chaired the LSC meetings.

## **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

There were seven LSC meetings organized in 2025: 07 February, 28 March, 04 April, 30 May, 08 July, 26 September, 02 October and 26 November.

A meeting dedicated to New Visa Policy 2025 of Nigeria (e-visa) with the authors of the policy from Ministry of Interior and representatives of Nigeria Immigration Service, responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Consuls also participated in the Expert Workshop on the operationalization of the EUROJUST – Nigeria Working Arrangement on 18 June 2025. Several Nigerian agencies participated in the workshop: MoJ, MoI, DSS, ONSA, NAPTIP, NIS, MoFA, NDLEA, EFCC, NCCC. Following the Workshop, the representatives of the MoJ and MoFA participated in the LSC meeting on 8 July.

Reports and relevant documents were shared with participants following each meeting.

## **3. State of play**

### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Member States and the EU Delegation continued to coordinate visa policy implementation through regular LSC meetings and exchanges of information on visa statistics, fraud trends and visa procedures.

Several issues related to visa procedures were discussed during LSC meetings, including:

- visa shopping,
- fraudulent documents,
- misuse of student visas and conference visas,
- increasing number of forged documents,
- high refusal rates,
- use of agents and misleading information provided to applicants.

Visa shopping was reported by several Member States, with applicants applying at one consulate while intending to travel to another Schengen country. Fraudulent documents, including fake conference invitations, fake documents and fraudulent civil documents, were identified as a major challenge.

Member States also discussed visa statistics and trends, including increasing numbers of applications and high refusal rates in Nigeria.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

Work on the harmonised list of supporting documents (Annex IV) has been completed.

The harmonised list of supporting documents taking into account Nigerian circumstances was presented and discussed. Member States confirmed that the list is very similar to the documents already required in their visa procedures. After review, the EU Delegation and Member States agreed on the updated harmonised list of supporting documents (Annex IV). The EU Delegation has transmitted the agreed list to the European Commission. DG HOME outlined the procedure for the adoption of the harmonised list of supporting documents by the Visa Committee, noting that the 2012 list remains in force until the new document is formally adopted.

Monitoring of the implementation of the harmonised list is ongoing, and Member States continue to use the same document requirements in their procedures. However, Member States can request additional documents from individual applicants on a case-by-case basis.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

Member States discussed the cascade system under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code and confirmed that the cascade system is being applied by several Member States.

Examples were discussed where multiple-entry visas are issued based on previous travel history and compliance with visa rules. Applicants who did not use previously issued visas or who did not comply with visa conditions may receive single-entry visa in subsequent applications.

The implementation of the cascade system varies slightly between Member States depending on individual cases and travel history.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Member States exchanged information and coordinated practices in several areas, including:

- visa statistics,
- fraud detection,
- misuse of Free Movement Directive (Directive 2004/38/EC)
- EU emergency travel documents,
- visa procedures and documentation requirements.

Information campaigns on visa procedures and fraud awareness were discussed, and the possibility of a visa information campaign in Nigeria was considered in order to address misinformation and fraudulent applications.

Member States also exchanged information on document verification procedures and fraud detection methods.

Through the EU-funded project *ConsulAssist*, two training sessions were delivered on 3 March in Abuja and on 6 March in Lagos for visa officers of EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries. The aim was to support consular authorities in combating document fraud related to visa applications and civil status documents.

These issues are expected to remain relevant and should continue to be addressed in the next reporting period.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

There was regular exchange of information within the LSC framework, including:

#### Visa statistics

Member States exchanged visa statistics and discussed trends, including increasing visa applications, high refusal rates and fraud trends.

#### Cases of fraud

Several fraud cases were discussed, including document fraud, identity fraud and misuse of visas. Fraudulent conference invitations, fake documents and fraudulent marriage certificates were reported.

#### Cooperation with local authorities

Member States and the EU Delegation engaged with Nigerian authorities, including the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, particularly on mutual legal assistance, document verification and cooperation on legal matters.

#### Cooperation with external service providers

This topic was discussed in the context of visa procedures and application processing.

Other issues discussed included:

- suspension of visa issuance in Abuja by FR due to high number of fraud and staff shortages,
- Nigeria visa policy developments,
- EU Emergency Travel Document,
- Entry/Exit System,
- visa communication campaigns,
- migrant presence survey,
- the Combined Expatriate Residence Permit and Aliens Card and business visas (at the request of EUROCHAM),
- radio communication coordination between Member States.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

Additional initiatives discussed within the LSC framework included:

- discussions on migrant presence survey conducted by Nigerian authorities with the support of IOM.

## **4. Challenges**

Major challenges to be addressed in 2026:

- high number of fraudulent visa applications and forged documents,
- increasing number of visa applications,
- organisation of at least one joint meeting with the Consular Group in Lagos,
- document verification challenges,
- reflection on the harmonized list of the visa supporting documents,
- the chairing of LSC meetings by one or more Member States.



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN NORTH MACEDONIA**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

17 Member States have diplomatic representations in North Macedonia, of which only 16 are delivering Schengen visas, for third country-nationals. Some Member States' consular sections also issue visas on behalf of their offices in neighbouring countries: France and Romania for third-country nationals residing in Kosovo<sup>10</sup>, Sweden for third-country nationals residing in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. Among associated Schengen States (AS), only Switzerland has a diplomatic representation in Skopje, but has no consular section in North Macedonia.

In terms of representation, Austria issues C-visas for Switzerland and Liechtenstein, France for Portugal and Iceland, Germany issues Schengen visas on behalf of Latvia, Hungary is representing Estonia, Lithuania and Malta for consular matters, while the Netherlands represents Belgium and Luxemburg. Sweden has cooperation arrangements with Denmark, Iceland and Norway.

Outside Skopje, Greece and Bulgaria have General Consulates in Bitola. Some EU Member States also have Honorary Consuls in or outside the capital: in Bitola (Austria, France, Romania, Slovenia-inactive), Kavadarci (Slovenia), Ohrid (Hungary, Poland, Slovenia), Skopje (Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia) and Strumica (Croatia).

Some of the MS consular offices in North Macedonia also deal with visa requests emanating from other among their own diplomatic missions in Western Balkan countries.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

The EU Delegation organised and chaired two meetings of the Local Schengen Cooperation in 2025. These meetings were well attended: 14 resident EU missions and one associated Schengen State mission attended the meeting on 30 April, and 14 EU missions and one AS were present for the meeting on 30 October. The LSC meetings were organised back-to-back with the Local Consular Cooperation meetings.

---

<sup>10 10</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244(1999) and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

Agendas and reports for LSC meetings have been prepared by the EU Delegation with inputs from Member States' Embassies.

### 3. State of play

#### 3.1 Application of the Visa Code

All missions apply the new Visa Code, and they do not face any issues. Most missions, with the exception of AT, BG, GR, and IT issue few C-Visas. Member States reported to apply cascading rules strictly and there seem to be no cases of “visa shopping” attempts.

Consular office	C-Visa approved	C-Visa rejected	Total applications
Austria	14	2	16
	294*	4*	298*
Bulgaria	1133	16	1149
Croatia	20	5	25
Czech Republic	60*	0	60*
France	24	5	29
Germany	76	23	99
Greece	447	34	481
Hungary	25	4	29
Italy	133	2	135
	54*		54*
Netherlands	38	7	45
Poland	6	4	10
Romania	25	0	25
Slovakia	1	1	2
Slovenia	10	0	10

Spain	20	5	25
Sweden	70	22	92
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,450</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>2,584</b>
	<b>94.8%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	

\* C-visas issued to citizens of North Macedonia in relation to short term work assignments.

### **3.2 Exchange of information**

LSC meetings have continued to provide a useful platform for Member States to exchange experience on their consular functions in North Macedonia, as regards statistics and trends of applications, or specific issues. The vast majority of applications are from Turkish citizens, but there are few applications from other European (Belarus, Russia), African (e.g. Egypt, Nigeria), Asian (Afghanistan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tadjikistan) and American countries.

Other issues: the group exchanged on other (minor) issues faced by Member States, e.g. the submission of forged documents to justify visa requests.

### **3.3 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

During the year, the group has started an exercise to compare the supporting documents requested by each consular office with a view to further harmonisation, if necessary and feasible.

The EU Delegation continued information to MS on the actual start of implementation of the Entry-Exit System (EES) and European Travel Information and Authorisation system (ETIAS), and other developments in the area of EU visa policy. The installation and management of the system at the land borders with Bulgaria and Greece was discussed and challenges highlighted. Following discussions, the EU has started a public information campaign to raise awareness and prepare travellers.

## **4. Challenges**

No particular challenges were recorded.



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO PAKISTAN**

## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN 2025 REPORT**

### **1. Introduction**

There are 17 Schengen EU member states represented in Pakistan (*BE, BG, CZ, DK, DE, EL, ES, FR, IT, HU, NL, AT, PL, PT, RO, FI, SE*) and 2 Schengen non-EU countries (CH, NO). All of these countries maintain embassies in Islamabad.

Norway issues visas through its regional HUB in Abu Dhabi.

Netherlands has its visa services centralised in the Capital.

Finland does not process visas in Pakistan.

Italy processes visas also from its Consulate General in Karachi.

Representation of Non-Resident Schengen States:

- Belgium represents Luxembourg.
- The Netherlands represents Finland.
- Germany represents Slovenia and Latvia.
- Italy represents Malta.
- Hungary represents Estonia and Lithuania.
- Czech Republic represents Slovakia.
- Switzerland represents Liechtenstein.

## **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

In 2025, five LSC meetings were convened on the following dates:

- 22 January
- 20 May
- 15 July
- 23 October
- 2 December

All meetings were regularly scheduled and well-attended, with the EU Delegation (EUDEL) hosting and chairing each session. The Local Schengen Cooperation (LSC) group emphasized the importance of information exchange and reinforcing cooperation within this framework.

The agendas and minutes of all LSC meetings were drafted by the EUDEL. Once approved by the group, they were forwarded to headquarters in Brussels.

Coordination within the LSC primarily takes place in Islamabad, where mostly all visas are issued.

On 2 December, prior to the regular LSC meeting, a representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) was invited for a 30-minute discussion on challenges related to visa appointments and applications.

## **3. State of play**

### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

The tasks foreseen for the LSC under the Visa Code are being ensured by MS and EUDEL.

The LSC meetings discussed several points, including:

- A high incidence of visa applications supported by fraudulent documents.
- Cooperation with external service providers and related oversight.
- Visa appointment slots being monopolized by agents, leading to prolonged waiting times for genuine applicants.

- Frequent hacking or manipulation of consulates' Google Maps entries and phone numbers, aimed at scamming visa applicants.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

MS (and NO and CH) present consider that harmonisation of practices is already acquired ref. C (2018) 6863 final Brussels, 24.10.2018.

MS' implementation of the Commission Implementing Decision on the list of documents to be presented in Pakistan is not specifically monitored. MS (and NO and CH) do not see a need to amend the existing list.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

There was no indication that the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code required adaptation. LSC members confirmed full compliance with the relevant provisions, issuing multiple-entry visas in accordance with the cascade rules outlined in Section 8.4.3.1 of the Visa Code Handbook to applicants who meet the requirements of Article 24(2).

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

In the regular LSC meetings, MS (+CH and NO) compare practices and seek a common approach.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

LSC members maintain regular working contacts among themselves. The EUDEL is fully integrated into the exchange of visa information between MS (+CH and NO). Additionally, a dedicated WhatsApp group serves as a platform for flagging emerging issues in real time.

The EUDEL has established a secure account for LSC members to facilitate the sharing of visa statistics. However, some members continue to experience access issues due to challenges with the authentication process, which has resulted in irregular compilation of statistics. The EUDEL is actively working to assist affected colleagues in resolving these technical difficulties.

Information regarding cooperation with external service providers and related monitoring is regularly exchanged during LSC meetings. The majority of LSC members currently utilize external providers.

Travel medical insurance (TMI) was not discussed too extensively in 2025.

Contact has been established with relevant local authorities. A representative from MoFA was invited to the last LSC meeting of 2025, and discussions are ongoing regarding the appointment of a focal point. This step is considered necessary due to the involvement of multiple agencies in the process.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

It was agreed to establish a dedicated visa task force, comprising relevant agencies including the Ministry of Interior (MoI), Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), MoFA, Cyber Crime Agency, and the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD). The task force aims to combat the rampant activities of fraudulent agents who exploit visa applicants by scamming them and reselling visa appointment slots.

Some reservations were expressed, however, regarding whether this cooperation will deliver genuine added value. The upcoming meeting will assess whether to proceed with this framework.

The Danish Presidency invited the LSC to a working lunch.

## **4. Challenges**

The involvement of so-called "visa agents" throughout the visa application process presents a significant challenge. As a result, a large number of visa applications are submitted with identical documents and travel purposes, often based on fraudulent information. Additionally, visa appointments disappear within two days of being released in the system, as these agents secure them en masse to resell at inflated prices. This practice not only prevents genuine applicants from securing timely appointments but also contributes to a high no-show rate.

Some visa sections face increased pressure due to the need to process a high volume of D visas, which in turn reduces their capacity to handle C visa applications efficiently.

To address some of these issues, it is envisaged to:

- Organize workshops on detecting fraudulent documents.
- Strengthen collaboration with local authorities within the framework of the task force.

## **5. Other issues**

No other issues to be reported.

This report was approved by Member States (+CH and NO) via silent procedure on 03 March 2026.



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**Office of the European Union Representative (West Bank  
and Gaza Strip, UNRWA)**

24 February 2026

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN PALESTINE  
2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

*25 Schengen Members States are represented in Palestine, with offices in East Jerusalem/Ramallah. From the unrepresented Members (Croatia, Estonia, Iceland, Lichtenstein), two (Croatia and Estonia) have embassies in Israel (Tel Aviv).*

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

*Due to the ongoing conflict, no regular Local Schengen Cooperation meetings were organised in 2025, with ad-hoc meetings and contacts focusing on providing emergency consular assistance and ensuring coordination for evacuation of dual citizens, residency permits holders and their family members from the Gaza Strip.*

**3. State of play**

**3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

*Member States did not report any issues with the implementation of the Visa Code. Some MS have observed an increase in the number of visa applications since the start of the war in Gaza, with no additional challenges. One MS reported that waiting times of appointments in some cases, especially during the peak season in summer (June to September) may exceed the two-week provision (Article 9 para. 2 of the Visa Code).*

*Several Member States work with external service providers (VFS Global, BLS International) for part of the visa application process related to the collection of documents and submissions of files. External service providers are working from Jerusalem and Ramallah offices, while locations in the Gaza Strip have been closed since October 2023. For one MS the strategic focus lies in actively working towards balancing the application workload between the Jerusalem and Ramallah VFS offices. MS report an overall good cooperation with external service providers.*

*Some Member States have reported cases of “visa shopping”, usually involving applicants from the northern West Bank (Jenin, Nablus) and, in some cases, having family members in Gaza. In such cases, applicants attempt to obtain a short-stay visa with the intention of applying for asylum upon arrival and, additionally where applicable, opening the possibility for their family members in Gaza to be evacuated or apply for family reunification visas.*

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to MS' implementation of the Commission Implementing Decision on the list of documents to be presented in Palestine**

*MS consider that harmonisation of practices is already acquired, with the general consensus that the list of supporting documents does not need to be updated. Some MS have indicated that, on an ad-hoc basis, additional documents might be requested depending on the specificities of the applicants' case.*

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

*MS have implemented the cascade rule as part of the standard processing of short-stay visas. On very exceptional basis, some MS have indicated that a multiple-entry visa might be obtained by first-time applicants where there is a substantiated purpose and application file.*

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

*No other initiatives or needs to ensure harmonisation of practices have been identified.*

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

*Some MS have reported a limited number of minor fraud cases, mainly involving falsified or suspicious documentation (fraudulent bank statements or work documents) in the visa application process, with most cases originating from the northern West Bank. Most MS have not reported major changes regarding the visa rejection rate, with a slight increase in the rejection rate reported by one MS.*

*Cooperation with local authorities and private entities exists but remains limited, and responses may sometimes be delayed. Recent exchanges focused mostly on national procedures for evacuations out of the Gaza Strip through Allenby Bridge and Amman, Jordan and coordination of convoys (obtaining necessary approvals, contracting transport companies and burden-sharing on seats available).*

*One MS mentioned attempts to systematically use VIS Mail; however, the response rate is low. In most cases, it is therefore necessary to contact EU partners individually. One MS raised the possibility of having a unified list of insurance companies for the travel medical insurance (TMI), in order to ensure the authenticity of the TMIs submitted.*

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

*N/A*

## **4. Challenges**

*Some MS indicated that are facing some procedural challenges with Palestinian visa holders from the Gaza Strip (student visas, family reunification visas) who are entitled to travel to the respective MS, however, as third-country nationals, they are not entitled to MS support in being evacuated from the Strip.*

## **5. Other issues**

*N/A*

### **3.5 Exchange of information.**

*The report was approved by MS present locally.*



**UNIÓN EUROPEA**

**DELEGACIÓN EN PANAMÁ**

Ciudad de Panamá, 23/02/2026

## **COOPERACIÓN LOCAL SCHENGEN (CLS) EN PANAMÁ**

### **INFORME 2025**

#### **1. Introducción**

Diez Estados miembros están presentes en la Ciudad de Panamá: Alemania, Bélgica, Francia, España, Grecia, Hungría, Italia, Los Países Bajos, Polonia, y Portugal.

Catorce países del Espacio Schengen son representados desde: Austria (Bogotá), Bulgaria (México), Croacia (Washington D.C), República Checa (Bogotá), Dinamarca (Bogotá), Finlandia (Bogotá), Irlanda (Bogotá), Islandia (Ottawa), Luxemburgo (Managua), Noruega (Bogotá), Eslovaquia (México), Eslovenia (Washington D.C), Suecia (Guatemala) y Suiza (Costa Rica).

Dos EEMM emiten visados para otros EEMM. ES emite visados para Grecia, Países Bajos, Luxemburgo, Austria, Estonia, Letonia y Suiza. BE emite visados para Luxemburgo.

#### **2. Reuniones de la CLS celebradas en 2025**

Cuatro reuniones periódicas fueron celebradas a lo largo del 2025: 12 de febrero, 30 de mayo, 28 de agosto y 14 de noviembre.

La Delegación presidió las reuniones y redactó las minutas. Las reuniones contaron con buena asistencia, contando con seis Estados Miembros en la reunión con menor asistencia y con ocho en la de mayor asistencia. Dos Estados miembros sólo asistieron en una ocasión.

En 2025, no se ha dado la necesidad de organizar reuniones *ad hoc* sobre temas específicos. Como todos los consulados están ubicados en la capital, no se ha llevado a cabo una coordinación de CLS en lugares fuera de la capital.

### **3. Situación actual**

#### **a. Aplicación del Código de visados**

A pesar de que los ciudadanos panameños no requieren visas para estancias cortas en el Área Schengen, hay otros nacionales residentes en Panamá (chinos, cubanos, dominicanos, ecuatorianos, sudafricanos, etc.) que necesitan visas de corto plazo para ingresar al Espacio Schengen.

La mayoría de los Estados Miembros evalúan la unificación de sus procesos bajo el Código VISA como ‘algo avanzado’. Durante el año 2025, aún no se han aplicado requerimientos armonizados para los documentos del soporte para solicitud de visados.

Ninguno de los Estados miembros utiliza proveedores de servicios externos en Panamá. De momento, el ‘visa-shopping’ no está considerado un problema.

#### **3.2 Evaluación de la necesidad de armonizar la lista de documentos justificantes**

El proceso de armonización de la lista de documentos justificantes concluyó al nivel de coordinación local en 2025. Discusiones se realizaron durante las reuniones de LSC de mayo, agosto y noviembre. Los últimos comentarios recibidos después del Comité de VISA fueron incorporados y aprobados mediante un procedimiento escrito con la fecha límite de 23 de diciembre.

#### **3.3 Evaluación de la necesidad de adaptar las normas generales sobre la expedición de visados de entrada múltiple para los solicitantes en virtud del Artículo 24(2) del Código de visados (“cascadas”)**

El tema de la expedición de visados de entrada múltiple no se ha tratado durante el año 2025, puesto que, en la reunión del 8 de febrero de 2024, el grupo de trabajo concluyó que no era necesario ninguna adaptación. Los Estados Miembros suelen otorgar los visados en línea con el código de visa. Dos Estados Miembros suelen otorgar un visado de entrada múltiple de hasta un año.

#### **3.4 Armonización de las prácticas**

Todos los Estados Miembros ven el valor agregado de mantenerse mutuamente informados a través de las reuniones periódicas.

### **3.4 Intercambio de información**

Por lo general, los Estados Miembros reportan pocos casos de fraude y documentos justificativos falsificados. En el primer semestre de 2025, Estados Miembros recibieron varias consultas a respecto del sistema de ETIAS. Se reportó existencia de páginas fraudulentas ofreciendo ETIAS. El volumen de aplicaciones para visados se ha mantenido en niveles comparables con años anteriores. Un EEMM reportó un aumento solicitudes de visados de 33% en relación con 2024.

### **3.5 Cualquier otra iniciativa tomada en la CLS**

N/A.

## **4. Dificultades**

Como ya reportado en el año 2024, la escasez de recursos y de personal sigue siendo un reto. Sin embargo, la Delegación de la Unión Europea en Panamá ha cumplido con sus obligaciones, organizando reuniones de CLS y ha trabajado en la propuesta de la lista armonizada de documentos justificativos.

A principios de 2026, se espera poder discutir la implementación de la lista armonizada una vez aprobada.

## **5. Varios**

N/A.

*Este informe ha sido aprobado por los Estados Miembros representados en Panamá.*



**UNIÓN EUROPEA**

**DELEGACION EN EL PERU**

24/04/2026

## **COOPERACIÓN LOCAL SCHENGEN (CLS) EN PERU**

### **INFORME 2025**

#### **1. Introducción**

Hay 14 Estados Miembros representados en Lima a nivel de Embajada y 26 Estados miembros presentes en Perú a nivel consular o de cónsul honorario representados en la capital y en otras ciudades del país (Cuzco, Arequipa, Callao, Iquitos, Bagua, Chiclayo, Ica, Piura, Puerto Maldonado, Trujillo, Tacna).

Algunos Estados Miembros tienen acuerdos de cooperación ad hoc que permiten a un Estado Miembro expedir visados en nombre de otro:

- Alemania representa a Lituania.
- Austria representa a Malta y Eslovenia.
- Bélgica representa a Luxemburgo.
- España representa a Eslovaquia.
- Finlandia representa a: Dinamarca, Estonia, Islandia, Noruega, Suecia.
- Grecia representa a Chipre.

Perú emite pasaportes biométricos desde el 25 de febrero de 2016 y terminó de producir los pasaportes convencionales / no-biométricos el 31 de julio de 2016. Estos seguirán vigentes hasta su vencimiento, permitiendo ingresar al Espacio Schengen.

## 2. Reuniones de la CLS celebradas en 2025

Con la entrada en vigor del Acuerdo sobre supresión recíproca del requisito de visados de corta duración entre la UE-Perú en marzo de 2016, los Jefes de Misión UE han decidido suprimir las reuniones específicas de la CLS a partir del segundo semestre de 2016 y tratar los temas Schengen complementario a las Reuniones del Grupo Consular de la UE, si/y cuando hubiera necesidad. Aunque los peruanos no necesitan más visado para entrar al espacio Schengen, hay extranjeros viviendo en Perú que necesitan todavía visa Schengen.

Durante el año 2025 hubo dos reuniones consulares, bajo la presidencia rotativa de la UE (Polonia) con el apoyo de la Delegación de la UE en Perú y donde siempre se mantiene la posibilidad de discutir los temas Schengen, si fuese necesario. La participación en las reuniones consulares es muy buena, contando con alrededor de 80% de los 14 Estados Miembros presentes en Perú. La DEL de la UE ha elaborado los informes de las reuniones. El Grupo intercambia información a través de reuniones VTC, por correo electrónico y sobre todo vía el grupo WhatsApp. En 2025 no se han llevado a cabo reuniones CLS fuera de Lima.

El 2025 no se ha destacado en cuanto a los visados C por personas extranjeras que residen en Perú, sino algunos casos de bolivianos y ecuatorianos. También hubo puntualmente solicitudes de parte de ciudadanos chinos, indios, turcos y rusos.

## 3. Situación actual

### 3.1 Aplicación del Código de visados

La mayoría de los EM evalúan la "unificación" de su trabajo bajo el Código VISA como algo avanzado, aunque hay algunos elementos que todavía requieren un ajuste fino:

- uso completo y comúnmente aplicado del formulario de solicitud de visado de conformidad con el Código de visados modificado;
- discrepancias en los requisitos de presencia física al volver a solicitar una visa cuando ya se otorgó una anterior (y más específicamente en lo que respecta a la toma de huellas dactilares);
- discrepancias en el requisito de tener determinados documentos traducidos del español al idioma oficial del país de destino.

Problemas específicos relacionados con la implementación del Código de Visas, centrándose en las reglas revisadas aplicables desde febrero de 2020:

Debido a otras necesidades consulares, no se ha llevado a cabo una discusión dedicada sobre este punto en particular. Sin embargo, los Estados Miembros informaron que implementaron el requisito de que cada sección de visas debe introducir medidas organizativas para que las quejas de visas se presenten, documenten y tramiten de la forma requerida por el Código de Visas.

### **3.2 Evaluación de la necesidad de armonizar la lista de documentos justificantes**

Los Estados Miembros presentes consideran que ya se ha producido la armonización de las prácticas.

### **3.3 Evaluación de la necesidad de adaptar las normas generales sobre la expedición de visados de entrada múltiple para los solicitantes en virtud del Artículo 24(2) del Código de visados (“cascadas”)**

En Perú hubo muy pocos casos de expedición de visados de entrada múltiple.

### **3.4 Armonización de las prácticas**

En los últimos años se observaron casos individuales de aplicaciones destinadas a eludir las regulaciones vigentes en algunos países. Todos los EM ven el valor agregado de mantenerse mutuamente informados acerca de los riesgos de visa shopping, especialmente debido a las diferentes regulaciones sobre el procesamiento de solicitudes durante el momento específico de la pandemia.

### **3.4 Intercambio de información**

En 2025, el uso regular del grupo WhatsApp permitió que el intercambio de información y la coordinación entre los Cónsules se realice de manera ágil, adaptada a la situación.

Los EM comparten preocupación por las protestas sociales, los crecientes incidentes de seguridad en la ciudad de Lima y en la importancia de contar con invitados institucionales a fin de explorar temas de interés común.

No se informó de casos de fraude a la DEL de la UE ni se llevaron a un foro amplio de LSC.

## **4. Dificultades**

*1. Describanse las respuestas a las dificultades, de haberlas, que figuran en el informe de 2025.*

A lo largo del año, el Grupo mantiene a sus miembros al tanto respecto de las regulaciones con respecto a los viajes y tránsitos UE-Perú.

No se han reportado dificultades específicas o de relevancia.

2. *Describanse los temas por tratar durante el próximo período de referencia (2025).*

Con la entrada en vigor del ETIAS (European Travel Information and Authorisation System), en fecha aún por definir, será importante difundir información sobre el nuevo sistema para ingresar al espacio Schengen en las páginas web de los Consulados y Embajadas, compartiendo informaciones con las autoridades peruanas (Cancillería, Superintendencia de Migraciones).

## **5. Varios**

Todas las Embajadas / Consulados comprendidos en la Cooperación Local Schengen han aprobado el presente Informe.



26 January 2026

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN THE PHILIPPINES**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

18 Schengen Member States are present and another 8 are represented from abroad.

The current representation arrangements on visa matters are as follows:

- BE represents Luxembourg.
- CZ represents Slovakia.
- DK represents Estonia.
- EL represents Portugal.
- NL represents Latvia.
- NO represents Iceland from Bangkok.
- AT represents Lithuania.
- MT accredited via China (visas are issued at the Embassy of Malta in Beijing and the Consulate General of Malta in Shanghai)

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

There were three meetings in 2025: 14 January, 25 March and 15 September.

Meetings are chaired by the EUDEL and are in general well attended. No events required specific ad hoc meetings in 2025. The meetings were held in a hybrid fashion (via Webex and at EU premises), allowing non-represented Member States to join. Reports are drafted by the EUDEL and circulated to the LSC. Visas are only issued in Metro Manila, as no EU Member State has an official Consulates in other areas of the Philippines (only Honorary Consulates). EU Member States also attended meetings on visa issues, in particular visa fraud, hosted by non-Schengen countries, including Canada and the US.

### **3. State of play**

#### **a. Application of the Visa Code**

As regards the Visa Code, the LSC assessed whether a local amendment of the assessment of the multiple-entry visa ‘cascade’ under Article 24(2b) of the Visa Code would be appropriate (Member States did not consider this necessary) and also discussed the practical application of the visa code handbook. Finally, Member States often share their practices on a number of issues (e.g. the granting of month-long business visas, the sharing of information on overstayers, experiences with local travel agencies, experiences with the issuing of visas for seafarers working on cruise ships, the application period for visas). The LSC also discussed the vetting of Schengen insurance companies.

The Schengen Visa Code is followed by all Schengen Members States in the Philippines.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The LSC discussed whether an update was needed on the harmonized list of supporting documents for the Philippines was necessary. Member States suggested amending Point II. 2) b) of the Harmonised list of Documents for the Philippines, which currently reads *“Proof of relationship, such as birth certificate, marriage certificate or photocopy of the biodata page of the sponsor’s passport”* to the following:

*“Proof of relationship with the host or inviting party: as applicable, a birth or marriage certificate or family book, a photocopy of the bio data page of the passport and travel history of the sponsor in case of non-legal relationship, proof of correspondence (boyfriend / girlfriend)”*

Upon consultation with DG Home, the LSC was informed that this change would not require a formal amendment to the list, as the current text allows Member States to apply the suggested change in practice. It was suggested that Member States could handle this issue by agreeing locally on an information sheet to the public, where they expand the requirements for proof of relationship in such situations.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code (‘MEV cascades’)**

The Local Schengen Coordination group discussed the merit of a local adaptation of the MEV ‘cascade’ rule. Member States in general did not consider such a local adaptation necessary. Member States apply the default rule, although some Member States resident in the Philippines have indicated that they issue MEV on a standard basis, even for very short visas. Other MS indicated that any applicant who does not need a MEV visa, needs to apply for a single-entry visa first. This discrepancy does however not interfere with the general rules as the periods for those visas are shorter than those described in Article 24(2).

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Not applicable in 2025.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

In 2025, ES, on behalf on the LSC (rotating task among MS) scrutinised the fulfilment of the requirements of the travel medical insurance (TMI) companies who had approached the LSC in 2025. On a regular basis, the LSC agreed to publish the names of those TMI companies which standard policies as presented seemed compliant with the Schengen Codex on the EU Delegation Website.

Several discussions were also held on cases of fraud and forged documents, as well as on specific population groups or locations which had proven to be hotspots of fraud. Such discussions provided a valuable opportunity to exchange concrete information among Member States, including regarding suspicious travel agencies.

The group also discussed several practical topics, including the roll-out of the entry-exit system, the issuance of the EU Emergency Travel Document, and cooperation on visa fraud with local authorities.

Statistics on the Schengen visas were shared and discussed on a quarterly basis, allowing for the identification of certain trends such as a significant increase in the issuance of seafarer visas whenever a new cruise ship is inaugurated.

## **4. Challenges**

The different resources (backlog) but also the practices executed by Schengen Member States for granting Schengen visas, even if done within the flexibility granted by the Visa Code, leads to a certain extent to visa shopping. Member States also highlighted that certain third countries use the require a Schengen visa to assess the issuance of their own visas, which adds on the workload of resident EU Member States. As regards the harmonisation of practices, embassies indicated they are often limited by the requirements prescribed by their headquarters.

Filipino citizens with official or diplomatic passports are still obliged to get visas for Belgium and the Netherlands, which is a cause of diplomatic difficulties.

## **5. Other issues**

*N/A*

*This report has been consulted with and approved by the LSC Group in the Philippines.*



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN DOHA**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

A total of 19 Schengen Member States<sup>11</sup> (MS) are represented in Qatar. All Schengen member states, with the only exception of RO, are making use of an external service provider (ESP) to collect and process visa applications. Two ESP companies operate on behalf of Schengen states in Doha, namely VSF and BLS.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

LSC group met twice per semester. The meetings were chaired by the EUDEL. LSC meetings are open to all EUMS, even non-Schengen member states as observers.

Meetings were always well attended with usually 15-16 MS present; none of the MS were regularly absent.

LSC continued to hold its meetings back-to-back with Consular Cooperation meetings, which were chaired by the rotating European Council presidency.

**3. State of play**

**3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

On the 2/2/2020 the LSC MS introduced, in practice, the new Visa Code. Nevertheless, the LSC MS had agreed that the new Visa Code is unnecessarily restrictive to Qatari nationals and contrary to its initial purpose, it adds administrative burden on Consulates. Therefore, they had proposed the exclusion of Qatari nations from the new Visa Code cascade (see relevant section below).

---

<sup>11</sup> AT, BE, BG, CZ, CH, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IT, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

Even though there is an understanding amongst member states on a rather unified list of documents to be submitted with the visa application, a formal decision is lacking. This is an area where the MS could work on.

### **3.3 Adaptation of the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades').**

Following the implementation of the new Visa Code, LSC MS suggested a more generous local cascade, which should be applied only to Qatari citizens. According to the Commission's Implementing Decision of 12.01.2022, C(2022) 27, Qatari nationals could receive a multi-entry visa as long as the validity of their passport, minus the three last months. The decision was based on the recommendation of the local LSC group which took into consideration the socio-economic situation of the country and its citizens as well as the subsequent migratory risks (or lack thereof).

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Despite the lack of a formalised harmonisation list of documents to be submitted, LSC MS discuss and adopt practices to ensure a harmonised application of the new Visa Code. In the context of the regular challenges met by LSC MS in their relations with the External Service Providers, LSC MS have carried out inspection visits to application centers to ensure harmonisation of practices.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

MS regularly discussed their experience with the External Service Provider and exchanged best practice as to the enforcement of legal and contractual obligations.

MS circulated amongst each other cases of suspected fraud bilaterally, by means of the LSC mailing list or through a secure phone communication group.

LSC MS regularly discussed the situation of people from countries of high risk, including Yemen and Sudan, in view of the guarantees given by a number of EU governments to refugees arriving on their territories.

### **3.5 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

No other initiative was taken in LSC during 2025.

#### **4. Challenges**

The greatest challenges for the LSC MS are related to the application of non-Qatari / non-GCC nationals. Their applications have to be thoroughly examined. Not only foreign low-skilled workers pose migratory risks, also white-collar-workers can be replaced by Qatari citizens anytime and thus might lose their right to reside in Qatar. In addition, residence permits for family members are costly and difficult to get. To many, life in EU MS seems more comfortable.

It has also be noted that oftentimes travel agencies are tasked by Qatari nationals with the preparation of their visa applications which result in fake airline tickets/ hotel reservations. More rarely also fake bank statements, even if Qatari nationals are believed to be bona fide travellers, with significant financial capacity.

It appears that travel agencies and/or job agencies have been misguiding non-Qatari residents on job opportunities in Europe, oftentimes presenting them fake invitations for job in the Schengen area. MS have already informed MoFA and the relevant local authorities on this matter.

#### **5. Other issues**

The Commission had proposed that Qatari nationals are waved of the obligation to have a visa before entering the Schengen area, but due to the European Parliament alleged scandal of December 2022, the process has been frozen. This has led to the disappointment of the Qatari authorities and nationals. During 2025, Qatari authorities brought up the issue during their meetings with EU institutions/ MS officials.

This report was endorsed by LSC MS.



27/02/2026

## LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION 2025 REPORT

### 1. Introduction

All 27 Member States are present and several are represented with Consulates-General outside Moscow (mostly Saint Petersburg). In 2025, Poland closed its Consulate in Irkutsk, meaning that at the moment there is no EU MS consulate East of Ekaterinburg in the Urals.

### 2. LSC meetings held in 2025

Due to expulsions of diplomatic and consular staff of EU Member states (MS) and difficulties in obtaining entry visas, most MS have limited resources and capacities for issuing visas.

During the reporting period, four LSC meetings were organised and chaired by EUDEL or co-chaired by DG HOME, on 20 February, 5 June, 25 September and 27 November.

Until the Commission discontinued the presence of the mixed post DG HOME / DG JUST in August 2025, the EU DEL used to prepare the LSC reports and disseminate them through ZEUS before their final adoption at the subsequent meeting. At the moment, the EU DEL has no capacity to maintain previous practices.

### 3. State of play

#### a. Application of the Visa Code

As far as the EU DEL can assess, in 2025, wide divergence remain as regards the period of validity and number of entries. A limited number of MS, (five) issue the bulk of visas including a large number of multiple entry visas with longer validity, including for the purpose of tourism.

Main reasons for refusal are insufficient explanation for the purpose and circumstances of the planned stay, visa shopping, insufficient means and threat to internal security.

Visa shopping appears to be a negative consequence of the diverging practices among the Schengen states. Several MS note the difficulty of identifying visa shopping at the application stage.

**b. Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

On 6 November 2025, the Commission adopted an **implementing decision establishing rules on the issuing of multiple-entry visas to Russian nationals**, limited the issuance of multiple-entry visa to close relatives of citizens of the Russian Federation legally residing in the Member States or of citizens of the Union and for a validity period of one year, as well as for transportation workers.

#### **4. Challenges**

In August 2025, **the Commission decided to de-prioritise Russia** by terminating the mixed position DG HOME / DG JUST. Since then, and despite commitments made in July 2025, the Commission has not taken any action to remedy the situation. It should be noted that at the moment **the EU DEL in Moscow operates without any Commission expatriate staff**, implying critical under-staffing and limited capacity to deal with Schengen-related matters.

Russia still represents specific challenges and sensitive political concerns in relation to visa matters. **This**, in combination with the still substantial number of Schengen visas issues, **underlines the need for Commission expertise**. Alternatively, a change of visa policy towards Russia might be considered and would probably be supported by a number of Member States.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN RWANDA  
2025 REPORT

**1. Introduction**

Eight Member States (DE, DK, FR, HU, LU, NL, PL, SE) and one Associated Schengen State (CH – now with an embassy) are present in Rwanda. DK opened its embassy in 2025 with its first resident Ambassador. HU retains a diplomatic office. PL is represented in consular matters (visa applications, passports and consular aid) by the Embassy in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania).

Belgium was expelled from Rwanda in March 2025, after the EU imposed sanctions on Rwanda for its role in Eastern DRC. This affects LSC importantly, as Belgium's was the embassy issuing Schengen visas for many Schengen countries, thereby complicating further the processing of Schengen visa for Rwandan citizens. However, the Belgian embassy in Nairobi has been equipped with extra visa staff and is able to process Rwandan visa applications within reasonable delays. Belgium currently represents **15 countries** from Nairobi for the processing of short-stay Schengen visa applications (up to 90 days) for applicants resident in Rwanda: Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland (including Liechtenstein). The following EU Member States direct their applicants to their national embassies in neighbouring countries (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia): Denmark, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Spain. DE directs third country nationals with residence in Rwanda to its embassy in Nairobi. FR issues Schengen visas for travellers to France in Kigali (since September 2023).

BE in Kigali was also responsible for processing visa applications of Congolese citizens resident in North and South Kivu and representing also Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden and Germany (only Congolese nationals for Germany) for this region, with approximately 1200 applications out of a total of 10.000 applications in 2024. These citizens are no longer able to have visa applications processed in Kigali. Some Congolese residents in these provinces have obtained Schengen visas from BE embassy in Nairobi or IT embassy in Kampala. There are implications for people crossing the border since M23 has occupied large parts of the Kivus (stamps in passports issued by M23 are not internationally recognized, M23 stamps visa in separated documents).

## **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

EU Delegation and Member/Associated States in Rwanda held six Local Schengen cooperation meetings, chaired by EUD, on 24 February, 29 March, 3 April, 29 April, 28 July, and 2 October (with a Webex link to a presentation of Visa Application Centres by IOM) 2025. Following the rupture of diplomatic relations by Rwanda with Belgium, several HoMs meetings addressed the Schengen visa issue including in a meeting of EU HoMs with MINAFFET.

EUD established reports, consulted these with all participants and submitted them to HQ. This annual report was consulted with Political Counsellors on 26 February 2026 and EU HoMs 17 March 2026.

The LSC group visited the VFS (operating in Kigali for the FR embassy) on 5 May and met at the PL Residence on 28 July. EUDEL met with visiting Norwegian consul and honorary consul on 9 September.

## **3. State of play**

Following an upward trend in 2024 of Schengen visa applications processed by member states Belgium and France (14.788 -Belgium 10.575, France 4.213 - an increase of 23% compared to 2023) applications sharply declined in 2025. In 2025, Belgium processed 3259 Schengen visa applications, 1967 in Kigali until the rupture of diplomatic relations and 1292 visa applications in Nairobi and France 6.009 (a significant increase). There is no consolidated information regarding the numbers of visas processed by other EU MS in their embassies in the region for Rwandan nationals.

### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

EU and MS in Rwanda are generally well prepared to ensure the execution of tasks as per the Visa Code.

There are no delays in the processing of the visas (including the 8 days of consultation (vision) required by one MS (BE) including for service passport holders. However, waiting times for appointments at VFS have fluctuated and amount to an average 4 weeks currently.

FR operates with 1.15 full-time staff.

As of May 2025, the Belgian embassy in Nairobi, operates with 4 local visa staff and one expat visa agent. The delay to get an appointment for a Schengen visa is between 3 and 6 weeks depending on the period of the year.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

MS present consider that harmonisation of practices is already accomplished. There is no need for an amendment currently.

The request by DG HOME to verify Rwandan procedures for and obtain samples of Rwandan travel documents was sent to the authorities with repeated reminders but received no response. Consuls advise DG HOME to request this information from the Rwandan embassy to the EU.

### **3.3 Adaptation of the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

The general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas of the Visa Code were applied by the Embassies concerned, however, given the limited number of actors, there are no coordination issues.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Rwanda has joined on 5 June 2024 the Hague Convention Abolishing the requirement of legalization for foreign public documents ('1961 Apostille Convention'). This means that Rwandan documents do not need to be legalized anymore by respective Embassies for use in their country, and only the apostille of the document issued by Minaffet is required for use abroad (signature specimens need updating). All present EU members confirmed the application of the Apostille Convention except DE, which still requires Rwandan documents to be legalised at their Embassy (and noted frequent errors in documents submitted).

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Member States have exchanged on the number of visa applications and the number of visas issued. In 2025, MS processed and issued the following number of C-visas – many now in embassies outside of Rwanda (this affects workload in those embassies and may need to be reconciled with the statistics reported from Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and Kampala):

FR: 6.009 +42.6%

DE: (only non-Rwandans until 31st of July); Service passport holders for official visits (from 1st August onwards))

- visa issued: 298

NL: requested - delivered: 16

BE (Kigali + Nairobi):

Applications:  $1967 + 1292 = 3259$

- Refusals:  $750 + 618 = 1368$
- Visas issued:  $1107 + 650 = 1757$

HU (Nairobi) 20 applications, 9 denied, 11 issued

PL (Dar es Salaam):

- applications - 147
- refusals - 44
- visa issued - 103

SE (Nairobi):

- applications – 212
- refusals – 62
- visa issued – 141 In addition, 9 applications were written off/dismissed.

There is a regular exchange of information on issues, such as the application of Council recommendations, acceptance of Rwandan digital certificate, cases of fraud, cooperation with banks, or the use of external service providers.

EUDEL presented the specimens of the **new ETD** to the Rwandan authorities as requested. The Rwandan authorities assured that all border posts would be informed accordingly. DE, DK, FR, SE embassies are now able to issue ETDs (but none has been issued yet – SE issued its first in January 2026). Some MS have informed that the software to issue the new ETDs is not yet operational. There may be an increase of ETD requests due to BE citizens and family members residing in Rwanda who have not been able to obtain new passports after expiry due to the closure of the BE embassy.

#### **4. Challenges**

The main challenge notably in terms of capacity and European solidarity is the closure of the BE embassy in Kigali and the transfer of visa processing to the BE embassy (and TLS) in Nairobi, and to EU Member States bilateral embassies in third countries. Rwanda broke off diplomatic relations with Belgium when the EU decided to impose individual sanctions on top officials of the Rwandan army and the Congolese rebel movement M23, which is supported by Rwanda. The BE embassy in 2024 issued over 10000 Schengen visas and this quantity cannot be absorbed locally and is also

straining MS embassies in neighbouring countries. However, these visa applications can be processed by the Belgian embassy in Nairobi, and by EU Member States Embassies in neighbouring countries. Rwanda Government refused the BE proposal to keep the visa centre TLS operational in Kigali to receive Rwandan visa applicants for the Belgian embassy in Nairobi, following the severing/termination of diplomatic bilateral relations.

France is the only EU Member State that currently delivers Schengen visas to travel to France, in Rwandan territory. This poses a concern not only for Rwandan nationals that need to travel to neighbouring countries to obtain Schengen visas to travel to other EU Schengen countries, but also for European business, that now need to bear the financial cost for obtaining visas for their employees travelling to European capitals. The same holds true for travel of Rwandan nationals to the Schengen region for seminars and trainings in the framework of the development cooperation of Team Europe. A number of European companies reached out to EU MS in the Schengen region, to advocate for the handling of Schengen visas in Rwanda.

In the case of PL, the consular office in Dar es Salaam restricts accessibility for such applications from RW, as it must also ensure a sufficient number of appointment slots for Tanzanian applicants (limited capacity).

There continue to be challenges regarding the authenticity and legalisation of documents electronically delivered by the authorities, which the LSC group members are still trying to address with Ministry of Foreign Affairs Protocol services in order to facilitate relevant visa and consular processes.

There have also been issues with false bank statements. The verification of bank statements is time consuming and onerous for consular staff, and some banks do not cooperate in confirming the authenticity of documents presented to the Embassies. Other banks do answer the requests for verification, but do not provide trustworthy responses.

The political situation in the Eastern DRC will have consequences regarding processing of visa requests from Congolese citizens resident in North and South Kivu, currently under occupation by rebel group M23. Document verification will become difficult and sensitive issues may arise regarding supporting documents not issued by DRC authorities. The group will follow these issues.

#### Outlook:

VFS will move to new premises in summer 2026. Other MS could consider these new premises for, at least, visa application collection in Kigali. DK and SE expect to use VFS Kigali later in 2026.

Sign-off

Uwe Wissenbach, Head of Political, Press and Information



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN SAUDI ARABIA**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

A total of 21 Schengen Member States<sup>12</sup> are represented in Riyadh, three<sup>13</sup> of which also maintain consulates in Jeddah. Norway processes visa applications through its Embassy in Abu Dhabi. Austria is responsible for Schengen visa applications for Estonia and Slovenia, while Belgium is responsible for Luxembourg and Hungary for Lithuania.

All Schengen Member States, except for Poland and Romania, use an external service provider for the collection and processing of visa applications. Most countries work with VFS Global, Spain and Slovakia use BLS International, and Germany cooperates with TLS Contact. Italy works with a consortium composed of Almoviva and VFS Global.

The majority of these LSC Member States use visa application centres in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam, while a smaller number operate only in Riyadh or only in Jeddah. In addition, VFS Global operates a dedicated office in Dhahran for Aramco employees.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

LSC group met once a month in person at the EU Delegation, which chairs the meetings. LSC meetings are open to all EU Member States as observers. Member States represented outside Riyadh are invited to participate online. Attendance has consistently been high, with typically 15-16 Member States represented at each meeting.

**3. State of play**

**3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

The Visa Code has been applied by the relevant Embassies in Saudi Arabia.

For some Member States, it has proven challenging in peak season to offer applicants appointments within the deadline stipulated by the Visa Code, namely two-week timeframe.

---

<sup>12</sup> AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EL, DK, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SK, CH, NO

<sup>13</sup> FR, DE, IT

Certain LSC Member States have experienced an increased number of applications linked to “visa shopping”. As many of these applications do not comply with the Visa Code requirements, this has resulted in higher refusal rate.

**a. Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The LSC Member States apply the harmonized list of supporting documents to be submitted by applicants for short stay visas in Saudi Arabia as adopted by the Commission. However, certain documents required by some Member States vary.

**3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code (‘MEV cascades’).**

Following the adoption by the Commission, in April 2024, of adapted rules for multi-entry visas for Saudi nationals, visas are now issued for a validity period of 5 years, including for first-time applicants.

Saudi nationals however represent a very low migratory risk for Schengen states and have not raised concerns in relation to visa-related matters. Therefore, the refusal rate for visa applications submitted by Saudi nationals have been low. Similarly, GCC nationals residing in Saudi Arabia meet the same criteria as Saudi nationals. By contrary, higher refusal rates are generally associated with applications submitted by migrant workers, mainly from MENA region, Asia and Africa.

Several Member States (CY, EL, FR, IT, PL) have visa-free agreements with Saudi Arabia for holders of diplomatic, special and service passports. Only a limited number of issues have been reported in the implementations of these agreements.

**3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

No other initiatives were taken to ensure harmonisation of practices. However, LSC Member States regularly consult to ensure uniform application of the harmonised list of supporting documents by the external provider centres.

**3.5 Exchange of information**

Throughout 2025, the LSC Member States exchanged on the following information:

- Visa statistics (peak seasons)
- Cases of possible fraud and other challenges encountered
- Share difficulties and experience in dealing with different external service providers
- Cooperation with local authorities and companies
- Cases of forged documents

- Reported cases of visa shopping

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

On 19 March 2025, the EU DEL organized together with the EEAS / Consular Affairs Division a Consular Crisis exercise that was attended by the LSC as well.

In November 2025, EU DEL and local DK Presidency hosted an exchange session for the LSC/LCC with the Danish National ID Center (NIDC) on identifying trends in counterfeit documents, digital document fraud, comparison of fingerprints and facial imaging, examination (tactical, visual and digital) of ID documents and other type of documents.

## **4. Challenges**

The main challenges that continue to be faced by LSC Member States relate to applications submitted by non-Saudi and non-GCC nationals. These applications require thorough scrutiny, as cases involving forged documents are quite common.

Furthermore, visa application centres require close monitoring to ensure that a unified and consistent message is conveyed, reflecting a common Schengen approach across all centres in Saudi Arabia. Member States regularly raise concerns regarding a recurring number of operational errors.

## **5. Other issues – N/A.**



Dakar, le 19 Mai 2026

## COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC) AU SENEGAL

### RAPPORT 2025

#### 1. Introduction

Au Sénégal, 18 Etats Membres Schengen (EMS) sont présents : Allemagne, Autriche, Belgique, Danemark, Espagne, France, Finlande, Grèce, Italie, Luxembourg, Norvège, Pays-Bas, Pologne, Portugal, République Tchèque, Roumanie, Suède et Suisse. L'Irlande, Etat membre de l'UE mais pas de la zone Schengen, dispose également d'une Ambassade et d'un poste consulaire, mais ne délivre pas encore des visas.

En 2025, 14 postes consulaires des EMS (Allemagne, Autriche, Belgique, Espagne, France, Grèce, Italie, Luxembourg, Pays-Bas, Pologne, Portugal, République Tchèque, Roumanie, Suisse) ont délivré de visas aux ressortissants du Sénégal et des pays qui se trouvaient sous leur juridiction respective. La plupart des Ambassades des Etats membres au Sénégal sont accrédités pour plusieurs pays de la région, pour certaines jusqu'à 9 pays.

Concernant les Etats Membres sans sections de visas à Dakar, 9 EMS disposent d'accords pour la délivrance des visas avec 4 EMS représentés : l'Estonie, la Finlande, l'Islande et la Slovénie avec la France, la Hongrie et Malte avec l'Autriche, la Suède et la Slovaquie avec les Pays-Bas et la Lettonie avec la Suisse.

Après un dialogue informel entre le Groupe de Coordination locale Schengen et Consulaire (LSC/LCC) et les autorités sénégalaises sur les questions des visas le 21 juin 2023, une deuxième réunion sur ce sujet a été prévue début décembre 2024, puis au début de l'année 2025 pour poursuivre le dialogue. Fin 2024, les autorités sénégalaises ont demandé que le dialogue soit reporté. Toutefois, jusqu'à la fin de 2025, ils n'ont pas encore proposé de date alternative, malgré les rappels de l'UE.

Étant donné que **la problématique de la fraude documentaire et de la falsification de documents** reste très présente (comme dénoncée notamment par l'Espagne, la France, mais aussi des autres EMS), en 2024, un **groupe de travail sur ce sujet** a été créé à l'initiative de la Suisse, avec le soutien de l'Allemagne et de la DUE dans un esprit d'intérêt commun et d'efforts conjoints de tous les EMS représentés à Dakar. Ce groupe s'était réuni régulièrement au cours de l'année 2024 et avait offert de multiples occasions d'échanges fructueux sur des sujets tels que les défis liés à l'état civil et les campagnes d'information. Le travail du groupe a abouti à la création du manuel « **Lutte contre la falsification des documents et la fraude documentaire** »

par l'Ambassade de Suisse. La dernière version a été partagée par la Suisse en juin 2025. Les mises à jour seront effectuées semestriellement ou annuellement dans le cadre des réunions LSC/LCC. Il n'y a pas eu d'autres réunions depuis une dernière réunion le 26 février 2025 sur les documents d'état civil et le projet « NEKKAL » (cf. 4). Toutefois, si nécessaire, il reste toujours possible de réactiver le mécanisme et de convoquer des réunions ad hoc dans le cadre de la coordination LSC/LCC à tout moment. (cf. 3.5).

## **2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2025**

Quatre réunions régulières du groupe LSC se sont tenues durant l'année 2025, à savoir le 27 mars, 24 juin, 07 octobre et 02 décembre. Elles se sont tenues en personne, à la DUE. Les réunions LSC ont été présidées par la DUE, au niveau du Chef de la Section Politique, presse et information (PPI), de la Conseillère Politique de la section PPI et de l'Officier de Liaison Migration (EMLO).

Les réunions régulières qui se sont tenues en 2025 se sont concentrées sur le partage d'informations (statistiques visa, cas de fraude consulaire, filières d'immigration irrégulière etc.), sur l'application de l'harmonisation de documents justificatifs, ainsi que sur des points d'actualité. Des informations plus ponctuelles ont également été échangées par email et/ou via les groupes WhatsApp et Signal, à l'initiative de la DUE ou des EMS.

La DUE établit l'ordre du jour des réunions, incluant les contributions des EMS. Un système de rotation a été suggéré pour la rédaction des comptes rendu de réunion mais n'a pas pu être mis en œuvre jusqu'à présent faute d'accord sur la prise en charge de ce rôle. Les EMS participent activement aux réunions LSC. Dans cette perspective, la DUE envisage également d'organiser en 2026 un premier exercice conjoint de gestion de crise consulaire, associant le groupe LCC et les conseillers politiques.

## **3. État des lieux**

### **3.1 Application du Code des Visas**

Les EMS appliquent le Code des visas. L'Autriche, la Belgique, l'Espagne, la France, l'Italie, la Norvège, les Pays-Bas et le Portugal ont externalisé la réception des demandes de visas (VfS Global pour la France, les Pays-Bas, le Portugal, et l'Autriche, la Norvège – depuis décembre 2024, BLS pour l'Espagne et l'Italie - depuis juillet 2023, TLS Contact pour la Belgique - depuis septembre 2021). La Suisse engagera la VFS à partir du 01 mai 2026.

Après une forte augmentation entre 2021 et 2022 de 26 387 à 56 866 en raison de la levée des restrictions COVID19, le nombre de demandes de visas Schengen traitées ont continué à augmenter en 2023 à 64 391 et en 2024 à 72 412. Les chiffres officiels pour l'année 2025 ne sont pas encore disponibles. Mais selon les statistiques non complètes collectées par le groupe LSC/LCC, le chiffre total pour 2025 pourrait également se trouver dans la fourchette de l'année précédente.

En conséquence de l'augmentation des demandes de visas, mais aussi du rôle joué par les officines qui fonctionnent comme intermédiaires en bloquant les créneaux de rendez-vous, plusieurs consulats font face à une pénurie permanente de disponibilité de rendez-vous pour la présentation de demande de visas (difficulté qui existe aussi dans d'autres pays de la région). Dans certains cas, il a été observé que les rendez-vous ouverts par un consulat pour un mois entier ont été emplis en une heure, voire moins. Pour lutter contre ce phénomène, des mesures ont été prises par plusieurs EMS et prestataires, dont notamment l'implémentation de systèmes de reconnaissance faciale pour la prise de rendez-vous, le prépaiement en ligne et le *one-time-password* envoyée par téléphone.

Depuis son entrée en vigueur, les EMS ont commencé à appliquer le Code de Visas révisé comme prévu, sans difficultés majeures.

### **3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs.**

Après discussion au Comité Visa le 22 janvier 2019, qui a donné son avis positif au projet discuté localement par le Groupe LSC, la liste harmonisée de documents a été adoptée le 6 mai 2019. Il n'y avait pas de difficultés majeures dans son application. Les pratiques concernant les documents justificatifs devant être fournis par les demandeurs de visas sont discutées lors des réunions LSC. En 2025, aucun exercice de révision de la liste n'a eu lieu.

### **3.3 Estimation du besoin d'adapter les règles générales relatives à la délivrance des visas à entrées multiples aux demandeurs en vertu de l'Article 24(2) du Code des Visas (« cascades MEV »)**

En ce qui concerne les MEV, les EMS ont donné leur accord de principe sur la convenance d'harmoniser les pratiques au niveau local et l'utilité du système en cascade, d'ailleurs appliqué couramment. Par contre, il n'y a pas un accord unanime localement pour l'adoption d'un système en cascade uniforme et fixe, qui limiterait la marge de décision local de chaque consulat. Les différences entre les différents profils des demandeurs de visas, notamment entre la France et d'autres EMS, rendraient difficile aussi l'accord sur des critères à appliquer de façon homogène. En ce qui concerne l'octroi des visas de moins de 5 ans, elles sont courantes en raison de la validité des passeports sénégalais (5 ans).

### **3.4 Harmonisation des procédures**

La plupart des EMS utilisent le **système de communication VIS Mail**, sauf exceptions. Les Pays-Bas confirment que dans leur cas la transmission d'information se fait au niveau des capitales.

### 3.5 Echange d'informations

Conformément aux dispositions du code des visas, les réunions de coordination trimestrielles et la liste de diffusion servent à échanger les informations notamment sur les aspects suivants :

- Les cas de fraude documentaire (falsification des documents de voyage, utilisation de plusieurs identités et des passeports par la même personne, abus d'utilisation des passeports diplomatiques etc.).
- Le manque de fiabilité d'actes d'état civil (notamment de l'acte de naissance).
- Le partage d'expériences sur la vérification d'authenticité des documents délivrés par les autorités du Sénégal et les pays sous la juridiction des Consulats basés au Sénégal.
- Les cas de fraude dans l'utilisation des visas et d'identification de falsification des visas.
- Les filières d'immigration clandestine (demandes de groupes avec faux buts de voyage religieux, sportif, culturel, etc).
- La viabilité des sociétés d'assurance de voyage.
- la possibilité d'une campagne d'information/sensibilisation conjointe

En 2025, la compilation et la mise à jour des statistiques sur les visas a été assurée par la DUE. Bien que l'exercice ait pu être mené avec plus de régularité en 2024 et 2025 par rapport à 2022 et 2023, la quantité de données à collecter en vertu de l'article 48 (3a) est toujours considérée comme trop vaste face à la surcharge de travail tant du côté des EMS que de la DUE. Les statistiques de 2026 ont pu être presque entièrement complétées au cours des premiers mois de l'année 2026. Pour l'année 2026 en cours, les EMS continuent à essayer d'assurer un partage écrit et régulier des statistiques.

### 3.6 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC

Lors d'une réunion du groupe de travail susmentionné sur **la fraude documentaire et de la falsification de documents** en septembre 2024, il a été décidé de lancer une campagne d'information commune sur les Visas Schengen et les risques de la fraude documentaire et à l'identité. Par la suite, le groupe de LSC a travaillé pour une telle campagne sur la base d'une campagne similaire lancée de l'ambassade d'Allemagne en collaboration avec le Centre Allemand d'Information en Afrique (CAI). Toutefois, cette campagne n'a pas encore pu être achevée, faute de ressources dédiées et en raison de la surcharge de travail.

À l'initiative de la France, un autre groupe de travail avec la DUE, l'Allemagne, l'Espagne, l'Italie et la Suisse s'est également formé en 2024 afin de développer une note conceptuelle pour un projet visant à soutenir le Sénégal dans la lutte contre la fraude documentaire à travers la création d'une Division Nationale d'Investigation contre la Fraude Documentaire et à l'Identité. En octobre 2024, DG INTPA a alloué 1 Mio EUR à cette proposition de projet dans le cadre du programme *Prévention de la migration irrégulière* depuis le Sénégal du *Mécanisme flexible pour la Migration et déplacement forcé en Afrique subsaharienne* de la Commission Européenne. Depuis que la DG HOME et Frontex ont manifesté leur intérêt à participer financièrement et qu'une note conceptuelle commune a été présentée par CIVIPOL, la FIIAP et Frontex au cours de l'année 2025, un projet distinct visant à mettre en place la division susmentionnée a été abandonné pour diverses raisons. Cet objectif doit maintenant être intégré dans un autre projet de soutien à la Police Nationale sénégalaise, financé par DG INTPA. La coordination des formations menées par des experts déployés par Frontex et les États membres sera assurée indépendamment du projet, mais en étroite coordination avec celui-ci, dans le cadre des groupes de coordination entre les EMS représentés à Dakar.

Par ailleurs, plusieurs membres du groupe LSC ont participé à une réunion d'un autre groupe de travail sur la fraude documentaire le 23 octobre, initié par l'Ambassade du Canada à laquelle les ambassades des États-Unis et du Royaume-Uni ont participé aussi afin de partager les dernières tendances en matière de fraude sur les visas, échanger sur les bonnes pratiques pour lutter contre la migration irrégulière et favoriser le partage d'expériences et de pratiques efficaces entre participants.

#### **4. Défis**

Comme les années précédentes, la fraude documentaire, la falsification des documents continuent à constituer un défi important au Sénégal et dans d'autres pays de la région dans lesquels les EMS basés à Dakar sont accrédités, notamment la Guinée et la Gambie. Des cas fraude documentaire et à l'identité sont reportés par rapport aux demandes des visas de toute sorte, court et longue durée (tourisme et affaires, accompagnants, conférences et groupes culturels, visites familiales, réunification, etc). Exemples des documents faux ou contenant de fausse information : les documents justificatifs, les lettres d'invitation, les documents de voyage, y compris des passeports diplomatiques.

Ainsi, la fraude documentaire et à l'identité demeure un problème récurrent au Sénégal, comme c'est également le cas dans d'autres pays de la région. Le problème est aggravé par le fait qu'il s'étend aussi à des documents qui concernent des mineurs d'âge.

De véritables réseaux, de plus en plus professionnels, spécialisés en production ou légalisation de (faux) documents d'état civil se sont développés dans la région.

Il est donc important que les EMS poursuivent leur approche commune et coordonnée dans la lutte contre la fraude documentaire et la falsification de documents.

La non-fiabilité des documents d'état civil au Sénégal et dans certains autres pays de la région (Guinée, Guinée Bissau, Gambie) continue à être un autre défi majeur. Pour le Sénégal, la zone frontalière avec la Mauritanie et les communes précaires de Dakar sont en premier lieu concernées. Toutefois, il est important de bien faire la distinction entre le manque de fiabilité des documents d'état civil avec les falsifications de documents. Des efforts de modernisation et de digitalisation de l'état civil ont été poursuivis à travers le programme « NEKKAL » financé par l'UE et permis certaines avancées bien que limitées. Dans ce contexte, l'engagement renforcé des autorités sénégalaises d'accélérer le processus de digitalisation de l'état civil représente un pas dans la bonne direction.

Le cas spécifique des faux documents et des fraudes liées à l'état civil provenant de la Guinée et de la Gambie reste également un défi d'une ampleur considérable.

## **5. Divers**



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO SERBIA**

Belgrade / 27.02.2026

## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN SERBIA**

### **2025 REPORT**

#### **1. Introduction**

Twenty-two Member States have an embassy in Belgrade, with Ireland recently opened an embassy in Belgrade. Schengen countries Norway and Switzerland are present in Belgrade as well. In addition, Romania (in Zajecar and Vrsac, which do not have any competences regarding visa issuance), Hungary (in Subotica) and Bulgaria (in Nis) have consulates outside the capital. Regarding visa issuance, Hungary covers Lithuania. Belgium covers Luxembourg, Germany covers Latvia, Italy covers Malta.

#### **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

The EU Delegation conducted four Local Schengen Meetings in 2025 (March, May, September, December), which were very well attended, including by Norway and Switzerland and non-Schengen members Ireland and Cyprus. For embassies abroad, the LSC ensures online attendance. Most of those meetings were organised back-to-back with the Local Consular Cooperation Meeting. With the support of the EEAS in the EU Delegation, DG HOME's European Migration Liaison Officer (EMLO), who is based in Belgrade and has a regional mandate for the Western Balkans, chairs the LSC. EMLO prepares and shares comprehensive minutes after every meeting. Occasionally, a Liaison Officer of the German Bundespolizei attends the Meetings to share recently detected cases of visa and document fraud at Belgrade Airport. The US Consul and a representative of the UK took part together in one of the LSC meetings to share operational experience and challenges in terms of the visa issuance process in Serbia, which was welcomed by MS. A continuation to invite consuls from other than Schengen embassies will be further discussed with the LSC in 2026.

#### **3. State of play**

##### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

MS report congruently, that there are no major issues with the application of the Visa Code and its revised Handbook.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

In 2024, the LSC achieved one of its key objectives with the finalization of the harmonised list of supporting documents for non-Serbian visa applicants residing in Serbia. The proposal for establishing the list had been discussed at the Council's Visa Committee meeting in October 2024. Following further exchanges with the LSC Serbia and final editing remarks by the Commission, the Visa Committee gave a positive opinion by consensus in January 2025. Unfortunately, the final approval by the Commission's Cabinet is still pending. Many Member States have expressed their displeasure with this situation, considering the extensive work that went into the process.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

Regarding the adaption of the general rules under Article 24 (2) of the Visa Code, most MS follow the suggested pattern, if proper documentation is ensured (sufficient validity of residence permit), whilst recognising that exceptions can be made in specific cases. Some embassies use a different modus operandi, and their administrations have advised them not to issue more than three-month visas for certain applicants.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Nothing to report. Practices are largely harmonised.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

The LSC in Serbia remains an essential platform to exchange information and best practices. MS openly share and discuss experience, trends, most significant issues and cases of fraud. EMLO frequently sends relevant information and policy documents via the LSC mail distribution list. Ad-hoc inquiries and other issues are also discussed via the EU Consular Group on the messenger Signal. The level of cooperation and exchange of information in general is excellent, and the MS are very supportive with each other and towards the EU Delegation. Annual statistics have been collected for 2025 and the MS agreed to continuously provide quarterly figures.

Most MS reported a persistently high amount in visa applications. Only a few reported a decline in applications. By far the largest group are still Russian applicants, followed by Chinese and Turkish applicants.

All available data show, that 20,513 visa applications have been applied for in total, and the refusal rate is 5,3% on average.

EMLO regularly informs about changes and adaptations of EU Visa and Schengen policy and other, less LSC-related topics, such as regional migration trends, organised crime regarding migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings (THB) as well as return and readmission. Topics, which are also particularly important for the MS, are the Entry/Exit-System (EES) and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS). Considering that Serbia shares borders with four MS and Serbian citizens are visa-free for Schengen, the EU Delegation and MS are in close consultations on these topics and monitor the implementation thoroughly. Embassies are encouraged to share public information about the new systems online.

Other relevant issues concern visa policy alignment, which is one of the key pillars of the Action Plan for the Western Balkans in view of irregular migration and security. Even though Serbia has made progress in further harmonizing its visa policy with the EU/Visa Acquis in the last few years, no further progress was made in 2025.

The LSC is particularly concerned about the Serbian government's practice of issuing citizenship outside regular procedures to Russian citizens closely connected with persons or enterprises under sanction regime and profiteers of the war in Ukraine. Since they did not meet the requirements, the Serbian government uses Article 19 of the Law on Citizenship that allows foreigners to be granted citizenship if it is important for the national interest of the country under a special procedure. A person is therefore not required to renounce other citizenship as well as to live in Serbia either before or after receiving the passport.

The rapidly growing number of migrant workers in Serbia is also a regular subject of discussion, as subsequent and fraudulent visa applications and irregular onward movements are expected.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

The LSC was invited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to an information session on the new digital authorisation system in May.

LSC meetings and Consular Cooperation meetings continue to be held together to avoid a multitude of additional meetings.

## **4. Challenges**

Taking into consideration that most MS have determined a persistently high volume in visa applications in 2025, the multitude of applications and the high workload of MS embassies in Serbia remains a huge challenge. To respond to these challenges, some embassies limit the appointments for third country nationals in order not to disadvantage Serbian citizens. Others have switched back from automatic online booking systems to a manual system, also in view of many no-shows and alleged visa shopping. Moreover, there are suspicious applications or those of insufficient quality, because documents and important requirements are missing. As safeguards in cases of suspicion, several MS ask the applicants based on a questionnaire, inquiring the purpose of their stay or what sights they

want to visit in the country when they apply for a tourist visa. Despite, fraud applications and visa shopping remain a challenge. The risk of fraud and external interference remains consequently high, and MS and the EU must remain vigilant on these developments.

Most embassies apply the 2022 Commission guidelines and do not issue multi-entry visas for tourism purposes for Russian nationals. Some Consuls were grateful for the reminder of the guidelines, as they were unaware and would subsequently adjust their handling of visa applications accordingly.

From the policy angle, the LSC will continue to address the challenges and recommendations

reflected in the Commission's annual Visa Suspension Mechanism report, particularly regarding the lack of visa policy alignment towards 12 third countries for which visa is required in the EU, but not in Serbia. Moreover, the granting of citizenship under accelerated and simplified procedures to nationals of countries that pose illegal migration or security risks to the EU remains a huge concern for MS.

## **5. Other issues**

This report was approved by MS / Schengen countries.



26 February 2026

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN SOUTH AFRICA  
2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

There are 22 EU Member States present with a diplomatic mission in Pretoria, South Africa. For Schengen visas, Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, and Slovenia are represented by other Member States. The following Member States have Consulates General and Honorary Consuls outside of the Administrative Capital:

<b>Consulate General</b>	<b>Honorary Consuls</b>
<b>Belgium</b> in Cape Town	<b>Austria</b> in Cape Town, Gqeberha, and Durban
<b>France</b> in Johannesburg and Cape Town	<b>Belgium</b> in Durban
<b>Germany</b> in Cape Town	<b>Bulgaria</b> in Cape Town
<b>Greece</b> in Johannesburg and Cape Town	<b>Cyprus</b> in Cape Town and Durban
<b>Italy</b> in Johannesburg and Cape Town	<b>Denmark</b> in Cape Town and Durban
<b>Netherlands</b> in Cape Town	<b>Estonia</b> in Cape Town and Paarl
<b>Portugal</b> in Johannesburg and Cape Town	<b>Finland</b> in Cape Town and Durban
<b>Romania</b> in Cape Town	<b>France</b> in Durban, Gqeberha, and East London
<b>Spain</b> in Cape Town	<b>Germany</b> in Durban, and Gqeberha
	<b>Greece</b> in Durban

	<b>Hungary</b> in Pretoria, Cape Town, and Durban
	<b>Italy</b> in Durban, Gqeberha, and East London
	<b>Lithuania</b> in Johannesburg
	<b>Malta</b> in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban
	<b>Poland</b> in Durban
	<b>Portugal</b> in Durban, Gqeberha, and Welkom
	<b>Slovenia</b> in Cape Town
	<b>Slovakia</b> in Johannesburg and Cape Town
	<b>Spain</b> in Durban and Gqeberha
	<b>Sweden</b> in Cape Town

Among non-EU Schengen countries, in addition to their Embassies in Pretoria, Norway has Honorary Consuls in Cape Town and Durban, and Switzerland has their Consulate General in Cape Town and an Honorary Consul in Durban. The Embassy of Sweden in Nairobi is handling Schengen visas for Sweden in South Africa as well as representing Estonia for Schengen visa applications. The Embassy of Denmark in Nairobi is handling Schengen visas for Denmark in South Africa (including Greenland, Faroe Islands and Iceland).

## 2. LSC meetings held in 2025

In 2025, the EU Delegation together with the rotating Council Presidency hosted three LSC meetings: on 9 April, 28 May, and 18 September. The hybrid meetings were well attended in person with a few participants attending virtually from other cities of South Africa or other countries in the region where they cover South Africa from. The EU Delegation issued minutes after the meetings. The German and Dutch Airline/Immigration Liaison Officers offered a workshop that was open to the Schengen community on 18 September in Cape Town. Coordination with the LSC in locations outside the capital has been ensured by using the common mailing list and enabling online participation.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

The preparedness of the Member States and the EU Delegation to ensure the tasks to be carried out in LSC under the Visa Code is good. Regular meetings, exchange of information and trainings contributed to the preparedness. The LSC members have exchanged information on the cooperation with external service providers, waiting times for appointments, fraud, and visa shopping.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

In 2025, the draft list was agreed upon in the LSC and was forwarded to the Visa Committee.

#### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

In 2025, the LSC started work on assessing the practice of issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades') and will continue the work in 2026.

The Member States have reported low refusal rates and a generally low risk of illegal immigration by South African citizens. However, several Member States have flagged concern regarding fraudulently obtained genuine South African passports.

#### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Member States have shared their visa issuance practices during the LSC meetings. This practice will continue in the upcoming LSC meetings.

#### **3.5 Exchange of information**

The exchange of information on quarterly statistics was irregular. Exchange of information on cases of fraud, travel medical insurance, cooperation with local authorities and companies, external service providers, and the use of VISMail has been conducted *ad hoc*.

#### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

In 2025, the LSC established a Signal group to enhance information sharing.

#### **4. Challenges**

2024 report listed, as response to challenges, the plans to move forward with harmonising the list of supporting documents and to explore the possibility to adopt a common cascade in South Africa. In 2025, the LSC approved the draft harmonised list and forwarded it to the Visa Committee. In 2026, the LSC will continue enhancing information sharing and the work on harmonisation of practices.

#### **5. Other issues**

In 2025, South Africa lifted visa restrictions on all EU Member States for short-term visas. Until October-November 2025, the citizens of nine EU Member States were under the obligation to apply for a visa for a short-term visit to South Africa.

Poland: Regarding European Union countries, the prevailing standard in South Africa is a 90-day visa-free stay for holders of ordinary passports. However, two countries, Cyprus and Poland, have been granted shorter, 30-day visa-free stays. A coordinated request (at the EU level) to standardize this situation, i.e., granting all EU member states a 90-day period, would be helpful in improving this situation. The above issue has been raised by the Polish chief of mission with the SA Home Affairs Minister Schreiber.



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF  
SRI LANKA AND THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES**

23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026

## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN SRI LANKA AND THE MALDIVES**

### **2025 REPORT**

#### **1. Introduction**

Five Member States + Switzerland are present in Sri Lanka. CH is the only State represented with a visa application centre outside Colombo: in Jaffna, Northern Province.

For the Maldives, no MS is present but all cover either from Colombo or New Delhi. Eight MS + CH are covered/use the VFS visa application centre in Malé.

#### **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

There were no significant developments or specific concerns in terms of issuing Schengen visas. Only one full meeting was organized in 2025 convened and chaired by the EUD. Other contacts were kept throughout the year by exchange of emails or the established WhatsApp group – managed by the EUD. Contacts with MS based in New Delhi have been updated and visits from some of them took place throughout the year.

As regards the “revision of the List of travel documents which entitle the holder to cross the external borders and which may be endorsed with a visa” exercise, launched in Brussels, EUD after sending Notes Verbales to SL and MV requiring input and several reminders, but no reply has been received this far.

#### **3. State of play**

##### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

13 missions rely on the services of the external provider “VFS Global” in Colombo. BLS covers one MS (ES) in Colombo. VFS also operates from Male for most MS.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

There is consensus among the group that the priority for 2026 will continue to be the review of the harmonised list of supported documents (that dates back to 13 October 2011) and the recommendations of the ScheVal mission of the January 2025 (to CH Embassy in Colombo).

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

Progress continues as regards the application of the cascade for Multiple Entry Visas under art. 24(2). All adhere to the model.

### **3.4 Exchange of information**

LSC continues to provide a useful platform for Member States to exchange experience on their consular functions. Updates on the existing bilateral agreements have been registered and circulated to all. Challenges remain on the exchange of statistics.

Frauds remain a problem particularly with forged documents. Visa Shopping has continued to take place and Sri Lankans continued to be victims of scams on work visas scams by fake work agencies.

A WhatsApp group was established for the group including all MS covering from New Delhi and proved useful during the Cyclone Ditwah in November/December 2025.

## **4. Challenges**

The need for a full-fledged posting of a Liaison Officer in Colombo airport remains. MS like in 2024 repeated this plea and reiterated its usefulness.

## **5. Other issues**

In accordance with EU Emergency Travel Document Directive 2019/997, Italy is the only member state that started issuing the new EU Emergency Travel Document as of 9 December 2025. The other MS reported delays in receiving documents and efforts to regularize the situation.



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN TAIWAN**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

Sixteen Member States are present (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden) and seven are represented by other Member States (Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Malta, Romania, Slovenia) in Taiwan. All sixteen offices are located in Taipei.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

LSC joined with LCC meetings took place three times throughout 2025, chaired by the PL and, respectively, DK Presidency, and co-chaired by EETO. LCC/LSC meeting are usually well attended. CH office also joins the meeting on a permanent basis. EETO drafts and distributes the minutes of each meeting.

**3. State of play**

**3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Taiwan passport holders are Schengen visa-free if their passport contains a national ID number. The LSC group did not report or discuss any operational challenges with visa issuance beyond the occasional exchange on visa applicants and occasionally suspicious cases (ad-hoc and case-by-case).

**3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The LSC group did not express a need for harmonising the list of supporting documents.

**3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

No need was expressed by the LSC group.

**3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

The LSC group harmonizes practices through the occasional exchange on best practices, ad-hoc and case-by-case.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Exchange of information regarding visa issues, consular services/assistance issues is working well in the LSC group, either during or outside the LSC/LCC regular meetings. The group is also a forum for exchange on crisis preparedness in the absence of a separate group with focus on field security. For this reason, satellite phone tests ahead of regular LSC/LCC meetings have become a practice.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

Three satellite phone tests were organised and conducted with the LSC group by the EETO in 2025. The Acting Director-General of the Bureau of Consular Affairs, MOFA, was invited to present the responsibilities of BOCA, the Taiwanese passports and the process of authentication of documents. As an initiative of the Polish EU Presidency, PL organised an LCC Disaster Preparedness Training by the National Fire Agency.

In 2025, the updated Joint EU Consular Crisis Preparedness Framework, with a focus on establishing various means of communication, was adopted by the HoMs group.

The EETO also timely officially notified the MOFA Bureau of Consular Affairs on the entry into force of the EES from 12 October 2025, as well as of the new ETDs, from 9 December 2025.

## **4. Challenges**

N/A.

## **5. Other issues**

N/A.



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN TANZANIA  
2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

13 Member States are present and represented in Tanzania.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

Four LSC meetings were held in 2025. Political Section of the EU Delegation chaired the meetings, produced, and shared minutes.

**3. State of play**

**3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

*Describe MS and EUD's preparedness to ensure the tasks to be carried out in LSC under the Visa Code.*

*Describe specific problems relating to the implementation of the Visa Code as discussed in the LSC meetings, in particular related to waiting times for appointments, cooperation with external service providers, and visa shopping.*

The LSC group have discussed how to best share relevant information on the operational situation to both inform of challenges and to coordinate the approach between Member States.

There has been discussion around fraudulent documentations, especially with bank statements, on waiting times for appointments, cases of visa shopping and of cooperation with external service providers. The group also discussed the mandatory insurance scheme that was introduced in Zanzibar. Furthermore, the meetings have been an opportunity for the EU Delegation to share information received from Brussels.

**3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The harmonised list of supporting documents for Tanzania was done in 2024. No further update needed.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

There is a difference in applying the cascade system among EUMS, as some MS interpret the rules more generously than others. It will be necessary to have an in-depth discussion on the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas to ensure coherence among MS.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

During the LSC meetings, MS exchanged experiences and practices about travel insurance reliability, verification of the authenticity of bank account statements and other supporting documents.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

EUMS share quarterly statistics on waiting times, refusal rates, trends and quality of application, cases of fraud, medical insurance and insurance in general. A number of MS are using external service providers so the quarterly meetings are an opportunity to exchange on experiences with monitoring and cooperation.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

Sharing of good practices that can facilitate the assessment of applications. E.g. one MS gets applicants to sign a statement to allow for banks to give details about the validity of the information provided directly to the missions.

## **4. Challenges**

As of Q3 of 2025, the Political Section of the Delegation no longer has the support of a Junior Professional in Delegation, leaving the Head of the Political Press and Information Section as a lone runner. The absence of a JPD seriously limits capacity to effectively carry out LSC responsibilities.

## **5. Other issues**

\*\*

The present report has been agreed by all EUMS present in Tanzania.



2 March 2026

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN THAILAND**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

20<sup>14</sup> Schengen States are present and 8<sup>15</sup> are represented in Bangkok.

	AT	BE	CH	CZ	DE	DK	EL	ES	EU	FI	FR	HU	IT	LU	NL	NO	PL	PT	RO	SE	SK
present	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
represents	MT		LI		LT	IS				EE		LV									
represents	SI																				

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

LSC meetings in 2025:

- 4 March 2025 : EUDEL + 20 Schengen States present
- 29 May 2025 : EUDEL + 12 Schengen States present
- 6 October 2025 : EUDEL + 20 Schengen States present

The LSC group met three times in 2025. Meetings are organised at and chaired by the EU Delegation. Minutes are drafted by the EU Delegation and finalised after a silence procedure with Schengen States. Out of the three, two meetings were well-attended by Schengen States present in Thailand, including non-resident IS attending one. One was less well-attended.

<sup>14</sup> AT, BE, CH, CZ, DE, DK, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, LU, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SK

<sup>15</sup> EE, CY, IS, LI, LT, LV, MT, SI

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

No specific problems relating to the implementation of the Visa Code have been identified.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

EU Schengen States have applied the list since 2017 and have continued to exchange views on the practical application of the common list in subsequent LSC meetings. In 2025, a decision was made to update the harmonised list. A revised list was agreed upon locally and forwarded to DG HOME for approval in the Visa Committee.

#### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

Local deliberations on a 'MEV' visa cascade took place throughout 2025. Schengen States endorsed, at HoMs level, a cascade for consideration by the Visa Committee.

#### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Schengen States apply a different policy regarding the exchange rate, with some operating on specific instructions/legislation from capitals.

Schengen States regularly exchanged information on their various caps (upper limit of applications) as well as maximum waiting times for appointment and processing in the context of harmonisation of practice.

#### **3.5 Exchange of information**

EUDEL shared analysis of annual statistics.

EUDEL also informed LSC of the implementation of the EES and upcoming introduction of ETIAS. Discussions were also held on the role of external service providers such as VFS. Joint monitoring was discussed but no decision taken.

In May 2025, some Schengen States shared they had encountered technical problems with VIS/SIS. These issues were reportedly solved as they were not brought up in subsequent meetings.

#### **4. Challenges**

There is limited staff capacity in the EU Delegation to carry out LSC work effectively. This issue is becoming increasingly pronounced as the role of the EU in the LSC has grown in recent years.

#### **5. Other issues**

Nothing to report.



24/02/2026

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

Four Member States have diplomatic representations in Trinidad and Tobago (FR, DE, NL, ES), of which three are delivering Schengen visas (DE, NL, ES), for third country-nationals.

Since nationals of Trinidad and Tobago can visit the Schengen Zone for up to 90 days visa-free for tourism, business, or transit purposes, the number of visa applications from TT nationals is not high. However, those TT nationals who need a visa for employment, any paid activity, study for more than 90 days, or permanent residency would still need to apply for a Schengen visa. Most applications, however, come from nationals who live in Trinidad and Tobago or neighboring countries but are from nations that require a Schengen visa. Nationals of Guyana and Suriname in the region, for example, require Schengen visas for tourism.

DE, NL and ES consular offices are responsible not only for TT but also cover neighbouring countries that do not have their diplomatic representations.

<b>Member State</b>	<b>Dealing with applications from following countries</b>
Germany	Trinidad & Tobago Antigua & Barbuda Barbados Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia,

	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Netherlands	Trinidad & Tobago Antigua & Barbuda Barbados Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Spain	Trinidad and Tobago Barbados Granada St. Lucia St. Vincent and the Grenadines Guyana Suriname

Though France has an embassy in TT, their consular section is in the embassy in St. Lucia. Therefore, foreigners who are currently legally resident in Trinidad and Tobago must apply at the Embassy of Spain in Port-of-Spain for Schengen visas for tourism if their main destination is France. Other visa applications (long stay and travel to the French overseas departments and territories) must be submitted at the French Embassy in St. Lucia.

Currently there are following formal arrangements with MS present in TT:

<b>Arrangement with represented Member State</b>	<b>Unrepresented Member State</b>
Germany	Estonia Italy Portugal
Netherlands	Belgium Denmark Finland Hungary Luxemburg Norway Poland Sweden
Spain	France

## **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

The EUDEL consulted MS online when preparing the report of 2024.

The EU Delegation organised and chaired one meeting on LSC in February 2026 to prepare this report. The EU visa strategy was also discussed in the meeting.

Schengen issues together with the European Travel Information and Authorisation system (ETIAS) were discussed during Local Consular Group meeting in October 2025.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

All missions apply the new Visa Code, and they do not face any issues.

One MS mentioned that non-residents not always get visa in the country that is “covering them”. There have been cases of visa shopping by Guyanese citizens who are supposed to apply for their visas in Suriname.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

MS work in close cooperation.

#### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code (‘MEV cascades’)**

Since TT nationals do not need Schengen visa, there are very limited number of multiple-entry visas.

#### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Regular exchange of information between MS when situation would require it.

#### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Not all travel medical insurance companies offering adequate coverage. If COVID-19 is not covered, it is not valid for the Schengen visa application.

### **4. Challenges**

No challenges mentioned.

### **5. Other issues**

Not directly linked to Schengen visa issue but for your information:

The UK’s government decided to introduce a visa requirement for TT nationals as of 12 March 2025, this is in response to a “significant increase” in TT visitors claiming asylum.



## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN TUNISIA**

### **2025 REPORT**

#### **1. Introduction**

In Tunisia, 18 EU MS are present with fully-fledged embassies and consulates (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden). All are located in the capital, Tunis. No Schengen visa-issuing posts operate outside Tunis, with the exception of France, which maintains a visa office in Sfax with limited appointment capacity. Since Bulgaria and Romania partially joined the Schengen area on 31 March 2024, they all deliver Schengen visas except Sweden, which is represented in visa matters by Finland. One non-EU MS also delivers Schengen visas (Switzerland). Austria represents Slovenia, Switzerland represents Slovakia for Schengen visa. The Cyprus Embassy that manages visa issues for the Tunisians is the one in Lisbon.

Croatia, Ireland, and Latvia are not represented.

#### **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

During 2025, six Local Schengen Cooperation (LSC) meetings took place, all well attended by MS. The meetings were co-chaired and organised by EUDEL and the MS holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (Poland during the first half of the year, then Denmark). The EU Delegation drafted reports of the meetings, which focused primarily on the numerous visa requests pressure, fraud patterns, legal migration schemes, and coordination with Tunisian authorities (DGAC, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

No separate LSC exists outside the capital.

#### **3. State of play**

##### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

MS and the EU Delegation remain highly engaged in ensuring that LSC tasks under the Visa Code are fulfilled, notably through intensive information exchange on fraud patterns, appointment management, and document verification.

Regarding tourist visas, experience very often reveals a phenomenon of visa shopping for the benefit of France.

The problems with limited appointments result from the large number of applications accompanied by false documents.

Documentary fraud remains widespread and continues to represent a major challenge for visa processing and verification efforts. Cases reported by MS highlight the persistent use of falsified or irregular documents by applicants seeking to strengthen their visa applications. The most frequent types of fraud include fake bank statements, fake work contracts for both seasonal and long-stay visas, irregular insurance certificates, forged diplomas and civil status documents, false hotel and travel reservations, and fraudulent CNSS declarations.

The main problems affecting implementation of the Visa Code in 2025 remains, as in 2024, the severe constraints in access to appointments due to organised capture of slots by intermediaries, travel agencies, and informal networks selling “guaranteed appointments” for prices ranging from 300 to 900 TND, and up to 3000 TND for family visas. High no-show rates caused by speculative bookings with false identities further exacerbate the situation. In addition, there is heavy pressure on processing times due to the need for in-depth verification of increasingly sophisticated applications.

Most MS cooperate with external service providers (TLS, VFS, Almaviva). France works with its external service provider TLS, through its offices in Tunis and Sfax. Spain cooperates with BLS. Platforms frequently show no availability while a parallel informal market operates openly via social media and travel agencies. Applicants often rely on agencies due to lack of international credit cards required for bookings (Not true for TLS). However, some embassies, accept cash payment because their electronic payment system only accepts international credit cards.

Recently, documentary fraud was noted in D visa applications (work permits for **Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany**).

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The harmonised list dates from 2019. Work on updating it is on-going.

Following a Schengen mock evaluation in 2025, MS agreed to revisit the harmonised list in a future LSC meeting in light of evolving fraud patterns and practices (e.g. travel reservations, proof of means, insurance validity, diplomas).

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code (‘MEV cascades’)**

No specific cascade has been adopted locally. MS apply the default cascade under Article 24(2). Some MS issue MEVs of 1–2 years, and in some cases 3–4 years, sometimes beyond the strict cascade logic. Five-year MEVs are not issued due to the five-year validity of Tunisian passports.

Most visas issued are of a family, commercial and professional nature and to a lesser extent, a limited number of tourist visas. Few applicants are able to travel on their own funds. Therefore, it is difficult to apply the cascade system and issue one-year, two-year/multi visas. The issuance of short-stay visas (10 days, 15 days) is the most frequent.

The cascade model therefore remains a possibility, but the model cannot be applied systematically.

Assessment of migration and security risks under Article 24(2b) is increasingly influenced using student, tourist and seasonal worker visas as migration channels.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Initiatives discussed in 2025 include additional questioning of applicants at counters to assess the credibility of travel plans, exploration of technical measures to limit appointment fraud (IP tracking, booking/file number matching, video calls, email confirmations), interest in revising the harmonised supporting document list, and exchange on communication practices to discourage intermediaries.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Information exchange within the LSC is intensive and continuous via email, messaging groups, bilateral contacts, and regular meetings. Quarterly statistics are regularly shared and discussed, with trends showing sharp increases in student and tourist visa requests and reduced refusal rates in some MS due to better-prepared files. Cases of fraud are extensively shared, with particular focus on bank statements, seasonal work contracts, diplomas (not in the experience of the German Embassy), insurance certificates, and appointment fraud. Belgium and the Czech Republic raised concerns about irregular travel medical insurance (TMI) documents and uncertainty regarding coverage for one country versus the entire Schengen area.

Cooperation with local authorities and companies has shown limited effectiveness in regulating fraudulent intermediaries, with concerns raised about possible bank. Cooperation with external service providers, particularly concerning appointment systems and monitoring, has been discussed at length, with interest in common monitoring approaches and technical safeguards. All MS use VIS, though some (e.g. Germany) have integrated it into national platforms, and certain MS reported operational complexity.

#### **4. Challenges**

In response to challenges identified in 2024 (including fraud, appointment pressure, and communication gaps) MS in 2025 intensified information exchange on fraud, discussed technical and operational measures to limit appointment capture, and discussed common messaging on visa procedures and travel advice. Cooperation is good with regard to the fight against illegal migration, but no reaction to document fraud.

Subjects to be addressed in 2026 include the revision of the harmonised supporting document list, follow-up with Tunisian authorities on appointment fraud and intermediaries, further discussion on trusted third-party models and seasonal work schemes.

#### **5. Other issues**

MS continue to engage with Tunisian media and the public on Schengen matters. Discussions also covered coordinated travel advice messaging (infrastructure, cash usage risks, passport validity rules) and caution regarding communication campaigns that could unintentionally increase visa demand. Several interviews have been given by consuls on radio, TV and to the online press.

*Approved by Member States present in Tunisia*



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO TÜRKIYE

## LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN TÜRKIYE 2025 REPORT

### 1. Introduction

There are 4 consular constituencies in Türkiye.

In 2025, 22 Member States issued visa in Ankara (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Norway); 18 in Istanbul (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland), 4 in Izmir (Germany, Greece, Italy and Romania), and 2 in Edirne (Bulgaria and Greece).

The Local Schengen Cooperation (LSC-Türkiye) convened separately, in Ankara, Istanbul, and Izmir.

### 2. LSC meetings held in 2025

In 2025, the LSC-Türkiye meetings were convened in Ankara, Istanbul and (once) in Izmir. In details, the meetings in Ankara took place on 7 February, 11 April, 12 September and 5 December. In Istanbul they were on 21 February, 20 June, 17 October and 12 December, with the possibility for online participation of consular officials from Izmir and Edirne. In 2025, the LSC – Izmir convened one in person meeting, on 27 February 2025. No physical meetings have been held in Edirne. An extraordinary meeting took place in Ankara on 13 January 2025, with the online participation of colleagues from Istanbul and Izmir.

Two meetings of the LSC Working Group on Truck Drivers took place on 3 April and 24 November in Ankara and Istanbul respectively.

All LSC Türkiye meetings were convened and chaired by the EU Delegation, which also drew up the follow up reports.

### 3. State of play

#### a. Application of the Visa Code

Schengen visas have remained a priority on Türkiye's political agenda, both domestically and in bilateral relations with the respective EU Member States, as well as within the broader EU–Türkiye framework. Press articles frequently decried the difficulties for Turkish nationals to obtain Schengen visa appointments to lodge applications, long waiting times for visa decisions, high rates of refusals and high costs. Particular criticism received the lack of preferential treatment for businesspeople and students (Erasmus).

Against this backdrop, the adoption (15/07/2025) of more favourable visa rules for Turkish citizens applying for Schengen visas (**so called “adapted cascade rule”**) that aimed to provide easier access to multi-entry visas for bona fide travellers (**truck drivers are not included**) was welcomed, including with a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye issued on 18 July ([https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-149\\_-ab-komisyonu-nun-vatandaslarimiza-yonelik-schengen-vizesi-uygulamalarina-dair-karari-hk.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-149_-ab-komisyonu-nun-vatandaslarimiza-yonelik-schengen-vizesi-uygulamalarina-dair-karari-hk.en.mfa)). The decision came against the background of the cooperation with Türkiye on migration, including readmission.

The process was initiated by the LSC-Türkiye and involved regular meetings and coordination at Deputy Heads of Mission and Heads of Mission levels in Ankara. Upon its adoption, the Head of EU Delegation in Türkiye held a press conference in Ankara to present the system and to stress the importance of bona fide travel. The adoption of the adapted cascade was welcomed).

With the caveat that the adapted cascade's impact requires time, preliminary assessment already points to an increase of issuance of multiple entry visas, i.e. 68,2% of all visas issued by consulates in 2025.

The year 2025 saw record demand for Schengen visas. According to preliminary data 1 **213 278** applications have been lodged in Türkiye. Issues remain, among them public pressure and misinformation, perception of political obstacles, user errors (incomplete or incorrect applications that have placed unnecessary strain on consulates), unauthorised intermediaries (fraudulent agents misled citizens, causing both financial loss and delays).

In several Member States, waiting times for lodging visa applications, including at the external service providers, was affected by delays compared to the standard in the Visa Code, with only few reporting very significant delays. A common problem posed the practice of some travel agencies to book significant numbers of appointment slots as soon as they were published, including through the usage of bots, making it hard to individual citizens to book an appointment. Among other problems were the booking of multiple appointments in several consulates by one person using multiple international passports and the increased use of less transparent platforms for online booking that do not allow a follow up verification of the required reservations. “Visa shopping” remains a concern that put pressure (mainly) on smaller consulates that do not necessarily have the capacity to meet the

increased volume of applications. LSC will continue to address these matters in 2026 with a view to identifying and enhancing best practices.

Turkish press has also recognised some of those challenges as factors that contribute to negative perceptions reporting about tour operators securing bulk appointments, significant delays in processing, high costs, as well as limited transparency in the assessment process.

On a positive side, all consulates have set up **a fast track for business applications and students**, notably Erasmus students, thus contributing to business and cultural exchanges between the EU and Türkiye.

**Decision-making periods** at all consulates were largely in line with Visa Code.

Against this backdrop, preliminary data indicates that in Ankara (22 consulates) visa applications rose from 246 800 in 2024 (partial data available) to 418 500 in 2025 – an increase of 171 700 applications. In Istanbul (18 consulates), the LSC noted a decrease in visa applications by approximately 109 200 from around 732 600 in 2024 (partial data) to **623 700 in 2025** (some states that issue visas only in Ankara have registered an all-time record increase in applications, reaching almost 330% on annual basis). In Izmir, the partial data available shows a slight increase in visa applications by approximately 3200 in total, from 115 500 in 2024 to around 118 800 in 2025.

#### **b. Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

Discussions took place to modify the 2021 harmonised list, but no specific proposals were made. The discussions will continue in 2026.

#### **c. Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

The adapted cascade model for Turkish citizens was adopted in July 2025 and already delivered positive results. According to preliminary data, a total of 1 004 809 Schengen visas were issued in Türkiye, of which 685 025 – i.e. 68,2% - were multiple entry visas.

#### **d. Harmonisation of practices**

The LSC - Türkiye discussed possible harmonisation of visa fees for children between 6 and 12, according to Article 16 Visa Code, but no decision was taken in this regard. Accordingly, the practice remains only partially harmonised.

The LSC - Türkiye also discussed the possibility of having a common list of trusted companies, but that was deemed unfeasible.

Following the adoption of the adapted cascade, in October 2025, the LSC-Türkiye launched a process to further harmonize local practices in the implementation of the adapted cascade led by a dedicated Working Group. LSC discussed a non-paper outlining a harmonized approach in addressing specific issues (drafted by LSC members), progress was made, but no consensus was reached at this stage. Discussion will continue in 2026.

#### **e. Exchange of information**

The LSC-Türkiye regularly exchanged on visa statistics and operational capacities throughout the year. Discussions about best practises put in place by the consulates, notably regarding business travellers and other specific categories and outstanding challenges were regularly on the agenda.

#### **f. Any other initiative taken in LSC**

**WG on Schengen Visa Communication Campaign:** LSC-Türkiye coordinated a Schengen Visa Communication Campaign aimed to provide accessible information about the Schengen area and visa related processes, to raise awareness on frequent application mistakes, to address disinformation, and to warn about unauthorised intermediaries. To make it easier for Turkish citizens to navigate the Schengen visa application process, save time and money, and help further improve visa approval rates, the EU Delegation - Türkiye and the LSC established a dedicated web page ([https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/t%C3%BCrkiye/more-favourable-visa-rules-turkish-citizens-applying-schengen-visas\\_en?s=230](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/t%C3%BCrkiye/more-favourable-visa-rules-turkish-citizens-applying-schengen-visas_en?s=230)), videos ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCRZaX6X6zU&list=PLw5V7dmdvArRGksStsILLM6a3H\\_iYrqX1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCRZaX6X6zU&list=PLw5V7dmdvArRGksStsILLM6a3H_iYrqX1)), factsheet and leaflets – in English and Turkish - as well as postings on major platforms on social media, particularly Instagram and Linked. The campaign was implemented in two parts: First Digital Media Buying Campaign (10 July – 8 August 2025) and Second Digital Media Buying Campaign (10-25 September 2025) and both achieved 3.0M programmatic impressions, 1.57M YouTube views, 9,278 Google Search clicks, and 10,756 Meta clicks. Finally, the campaign page became one of the most visited webpages in the EEAS history, demonstrating the campaign’s success in directing audiences to trusted (EU) sources.

**WG on Truck Drivers:** Truck drivers are not included in the implementation of the adapted cascade. In general, MS reported issues with the quality of visa applications for truck drivers, fake documents, concerns related to smuggling and other criminal activities and saw merit in discussing a joint approach to address them. Accordingly, EUDEL convened two meetings of the dedicated working group on 3 April in Ankara and 24 November in Istanbul seeking harmonized approach. A dedicated non-paper has been discussed. Coordination will continue in 2026.

#### 4. Challenges

The LSC continued to note the concerning economic conditions in Türkiye, heavily affecting the savings and income of visa applicants.

Moreover, the LSC noted the following main challenges, which were also communicated to the Turkish authorities: fraudulent applications with fake documents; unscrupulous behaviour from travel agencies, including booking all available appointments; various issues of concern related to truck drivers,; problems with travel insurances; direct requests from Turkish authorities for fast-tracking visas, which disrupt the work of consulates; proliferation and lack of transparency with regard both ordinary and official passports, and particularly special (or “green”) passports; visa shopping; visa applicants with visa already issued deviating from the indicated destination or itinerary of their travel; unrealistic itineraries; misinformation about Schengen visas.

#### 5. Other issues

According to the data received by the Member States, in 2025 there were a total **1 213 278** Schengen visa applications lodged all over Türkiye. **1 004 809** Schengen visas were issued, among them, **685 025** were multiple entry visas (68,2%). On the other hand, the refusal rate of all Schengen visa applications stood at 14,5%. Some MS noted that not all those refusals were TR citizens.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO TURKMENISTAN

Ashgabat, 27.02.2026

## LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN TURKMENISTAN (TM) 2025 REPORT

### 1. Introduction

Four Member States (DE, FR, IT, RO) are present in Ashgabat (Embassies). There is no consular presence outside the capital. In Ashgabat, 14 Schengen states (AT, BE, EE, FI, GR, LV, LUX, MT, NL, NO, PT, ES, SE, CH) are represented locally by DE. France has an Embassy in Ashgabat but has no visa section and is represented locally by IT. Romania issues visas only on its own behalf.

Other MS serve TM citizens from their embassies or consulates located in Ankara, Baku, Tashkent, Astana, Almaty or Moscow, in some cases using external service providers located outside TM. In some cases, DE also issues Schengen visas on behalf of MS it does not have representation agreements with, but it is usually limited to emergencies.

### 2. LSC meetings held in 2025

Two regular meetings were held in 2025: on 29 April and on 30 October. Both meetings were attended by all the MS present in Ashgabat, but due to staff rotation there was quite a difference in the persons attending the meetings. Both meetings were chaired by EUDEL, and reports were drawn by EUDEL too.

### 3. State of play

#### 3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Lack of service providers, visa fraud, visa shopping and selling of online slots are the most important obstacles from the point of view of application of the Visa Code.

#### 3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The Harmonised List of Supporting Documents has been formally approved by the Local Schengen Cooperation group members in April 2025. However, group members admit to not always respecting the list, explaining it by the need to tackle the increasing fraud risks.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

LSC members in principle agreed to adhere to the cascade rule as per the revised Visa Code, except for visas with 5 years validity. This is not possible in Turkmen context, as the maximum validity of Turkmen passports is 5 years. Otherwise, the cascade system is being applied.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

N/A

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Information on statistics and trends has been shared following both meetings.

The estimated total yearly amount of Schengen visas issued by the three Embassies running visa sections is approx. 8800, as confirmed at the October meeting. The visas were issued mostly for business and tourism purposes. The year-to-year trend (as compared to 2024) seems stable. Note that DE reported a significant increase in the demand for national (D) visas.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

It was suggested at one meeting that perhaps a future EU funded project could explore ways of automated pre-verification of the applicants' documents.

Cooperation against visa fraud should be intensified. In 2026, it is foreseen to hold an additional LSC meeting about slot coordination.

## **4. Challenges**

Low awareness by Turkmen citizens of EU visa procedures is a significant problem.

Visa fraud is however the biggest issue faced by the group in Turkmenistan. The refusal rate for national visas is higher than for Schengen visas (mostly due to the higher degree of use of false supporting documents for working visas). But false documents are also used for Schengen visas. All kinds of supporting documents are being falsified.

Unfortunately, there were cases when official Verbal Notes included incorrect/insufficient information about the applicants, the purpose and the destination of the visit. The growing extent of abuse of official Verbal Notes is worrying - particularly when they are used as means to secure visas as a favour: for private persons' tourist trips, etc.

Another issue is the practice of selling online slots for visa appointments. Apparently, a slot costs 2 to 3 thousand manats (up to 150 EUR on the unofficial market rate). It is difficult to fight this practice.

Also, the high number of corruption cases in the Turkmen Migration Service is worrying, as well as difficulties faced by Turkmen citizens whose passports expired while they are abroad, including in the EU. To renew a passport, Turkmen citizens have to come back to the country, with no guarantee that they would be let go abroad again.

This is first of all a human rights issue, but it is also relevant for EU migration situation: some TM citizens with expired passports may choose to live in the EU illegally, not risking a return to TM. However, the number of overstays in the EU is not significant statistically. According to the Prague Process TM country profile, the total number per year does not exceed 100 and concerns mainly DE, PL and NL.

There are no external service providers in TM – which means that the workload of the consular services is huge, especially that consular sections of MS Embassies are generally facing understaffing. Therefore, it would be extremely difficult for them to accommodate additional visa representations.

## **5. Other issues**

There is a growing number of ad-hoc requests coming from non-represented countries (notably PL), and it seems that consular presence of additional countries in TM would be much needed (this was confirmed in LSC discussions).

Note that TM citizens need visas nearly to all countries of the world, which means that they need to obtain AZ or UZ visas to go to the nearest Embassy of an unrepresented MS. There are also no direct flights to neighbouring countries, so time and cost is added for the applicant related to obtaining the AZ/UZ visa and land/sea travel to Baku or Tashkent.

*Approved by LSC members on 27.02.2026*



**EUROPEAN UNION**  
**DELEGATION TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**  
**2025 REPORT**

## **1. Introduction**

All 27 EU Member States are represented in the UAE: 26 MS have resident embassies in Abu Dhabi and HR has a Consulate General in Dubai. Besides, BG, DE, DK, FR, IT, MT, NL and RO have also Consulates General in Dubai. Non-EU member states Switzerland and Norway are represented with an Embassy in Abu Dhabi and a Consulate General in Dubai.

Four Schengen countries (DE, CH, NL, SE) have dedicated Airport Liaison Officers (ALO) in Dubai and NO has a dedicated Immigration Liaison Officer (ILO). All of them also inform other MSs - by courtesy - when relevant.

Since 2021, a European Migration Officer (EMLO) for the Gulf region (UAE, Qatar, and Oman) was appointed at the DE Embassy in Abu Dhabi in cooperation between the European Commission and the German Federal Police. In 2023-2024, EUDEL in cooperation with FR Embassy and Commission (DG HOME) tried to establish new Common Airport Liaison Officer (CALO) at Dubai International Airport.

## **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

EUDEL organised three formal LSC meetings (back-to-back with EU LCC) in cooperation with local rotating EU Presidencies (PL and DK).

All LSC meetings were well attended (EUMS plus CH and NO). The meetings were chaired by EUDEL, in coordination with the rotating local EU Presidency. As agreed, CH and NO were invited to stay also for the (back-to-back) LCC meetings as observers. Vice-versa, non-Schengen countries usually attended the LSC meetings. Colleagues from CGs in Dubai usually come to Abu Dhabi (i.e. 1.5 h drive). Minutes were drafted and circulated by the EUDEL.

Consultations, mutual updates, and exchange of expertise, incl. on Schengen visa related issues, took place via email and extensively also via the WhatsApp Consular group (moved to Signal by the end of 2025).

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

The LSC regularly discussed the implementation of the Visa Code as well as other issues relevant to the EU-UAE Schengen visa liberalization agreement (since 2015). Discussions have notably focused on fraud prevention, limited capacities within the visa sections/crowd management (notably introduction of waitlist vs. cap lifting), inconsistencies in cooperation with external agencies (*VFS Global* and *BLS International*), their practices and capacity limits as well as efforts to prevent risks of *visa shopping*.

Particular attention was dedicated to regular and systematic misuse of visa applicants' reservation system (overbooking vs. *dead slots*). Schengen countries also discussed challenges related to the implementation and functionality of waitlists and facial recognition systems.

As in previous reports, Schengen countries noted the high demand of applicants for Schengen visa (some MS are considering removing the capacity cap while others have successfully introduced a waitlist system). DK and NO removed the capacity cap (in 2023 and in the fall of 2025, respectively).

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

*For the locations where work on this has not been completed*

In the LSC meeting that took place in October 2025, Schengen countries indicated the need to update the harmonized list of documents. The current list was approved in 2020. The process to update the list is ongoing and more discussions on this issue are foreseen in 2026.

#### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

*For the locations where a specific cascade is in force:*

In 2025, the group briefly discussed the application of the *cascade system* (ref. also to 3.1) related to longer validity of multiple entry visas for GCC countries' nationals – residents in the UAE. This issue will remain in the agenda for 2026 and there will be further discussions on the application of the cascade system.

Given the overflow of (*lower quality*) Schengen visa applications and damaging activities of some local visa "agents" (ref. to illegal or irregular migration risks), local circumstances did not seem to require adjustments of the general rules (in sense of easing them for other groups of applicants).

#### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

In cooperation with the external partners - *VFS Global* and *BLS International*, LSC managed to identify and implement technical and procedural solutions to reduce the ratio of reservation systems'

*no-shows*, and to enhance the capacity available for regular *bona fide* visa applicants. This in the context of constantly overbooked reservation systems and Schengen countries' capacities stretched.

### 3.5 Exchange of information

Given a constantly high demand and upward trend, Schengen countries have been exchanging data and discussing their actual availability of visa appointment slots and refusal rates.

Cases of fraud have become a regular topic for LSC - in cooperation with ALOs/ILOs.

Cooperation with local authorities and companies continues to be challenging, for instance as regards verification of visa applicants' residential status (after relevant stickers and records in passports were replaced by local authorities' digital evidence - since 2022), bank statements, employer's testimonials, travel medical insurance.

Throughout 2025, EU DEL informed local authorities and MSs' Embassies and CGs on the Exit/Entry System as well as on the upcoming launch of ETIAS in 2026.

## 4. Challenges

- **Migration route via Dubai and Sharjah airports.** For some MSs, their airlines, and ALOs/ILOs in Dubai, it has become more difficult to assess immigration risk and verify passengers transiting from/via Dubai through airports in EU on their way to Latin America (esp. Mexico) and back to EU.

- **Cases of fraudulent travel documents, fake Schengen visas, EUMSs' residence permits etc.** were regularly reported by the like-minded group in Dubai (*ERIL*). LSC will continue monitoring and discussing possible ways of addressing the high use of fraudulent documents in visa applications and combatting the illegal agents operating out of Dubai and Sharjah, both selling fraudulent documents and even fake Schengen stickers.

- **Enhanced cooperation with local authorities and companies,** as regards verification of visa applicants' residential status, bank statements, employer's testimonials or travel medical insurance and fighting fraud in visa applications.

## 5. Other issues – N/A

All represented Schengen Embassies were informed about this report and approved it.



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA**

20/02/2025

## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN UGANDA**

### **2025 REPORT**

#### **1. Introduction**

Ten Member States, comprising eight embassies and two other diplomatic representations, are actively present in Uganda. Additionally, thirteen other Member States are formally represented through various diplomatic arrangements.

#### **2. LSC meetings held in 2024**

The Local Schengen Cooperation (LSC) meetings were held regularly throughout 2025, generally on a quarterly basis and, when appropriate, in conjunction with the Local Cooperation Council (LCC). These meetings ensured broad participation from Member States, both in person and remotely, including those not physically represented in Uganda. They are hosted at the EU delegation and chaired by the Head of the Political section of the delegation.

The joint configuration with the LCC continued to enhance coordination, particularly on issues where consular and administrative matters intersected, and facilitated the exchange of information with non-resident Member States.

#### **3. State of play**

##### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Member States remain generally well equipped to handle consular affairs. Most embassies (around 75%) continue to rely on external service providers for the intake of visa applications.

Demand for Schengen visas remained high throughout 2025. Certain consulates experienced significantly higher volumes, particularly around major travel seasons and international events.

As in previous years, this occasionally led to cases of “visa shopping,” with applicants attempting to lodge applications at less busy consulates.

Member States continued to exchange best practices within the LSC framework to address these trends, including improved appointment-management systems, enhanced scrutiny of travel itineraries, and closer cooperation with local authorities and partner missions.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

Member States present in Uganda consider that a high degree of harmonisation has already been achieved. The LSC remains the primary platform for comparing practices, addressing emerging issues, and ensuring consistency across Schengen missions.

#### **a. Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

The implementation of the Multiple-Entry Visa (MEV) cascade in Uganda continues to follow Article 24(2) of the Visa Code, with broadly uniform approaches among Schengen consulates.

Member States apply a progressive system for multiple-entry visas: single-entry visas for first-time or irregular travellers, followed by increasing validity periods (6 months → 1 year → 2 years → 3 years → 5 years) for frequent bona fide travellers. Consulates take into account all previous Schengen visas issued, regardless of the issuing Member State.

There is a general interest among Member States in increasing the proportion of longer-validity MEVs in order to reduce pressure on visa sections and facilitate travel for reliable applicants. The current provisions of Article 24(2) are considered sufficiently flexible for local implementation.

However, challenges remain, notably the variable quality of applications and a limited understanding among applicants of how visa validity is determined. These factors continue to constrain the broader issuance of long-validity MEVs.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Following a request from Member States, the EU Delegation updated the list of insurance companies recognised by Schengen missions in Kampala. This process, carried out in consultation with consular sections, aims to ensure consistency, reliability, and transparency for applicants.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

LSC meetings in 2025 continued to serve as an effective platform for the exchange of operational information, the harmonisation of procedures, and the development of common positions.

The growing number of visa applicants, combined with limited staffing capacities in consular sections, resulted in sustained pressure on appointment systems and remained a central topic of discussion throughout the year.

Member States also continued to cooperate closely in identifying fraud schemes and developing common responses. Particular attention was given to:

- fraudulent travel documentation;
- marriages of convenience linked to family reunification;
- surrogacy-related cases; and
- forged financial or employment documents.

Cooperation with local authorities, including airport police, remained positive. The Uganda airport police continued to demonstrate effectiveness in identifying and reporting suspected fraud cases.

Member States also exchanged best practices in verifying documents with local administrations and financial institutions.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

In 2025, Member States followed up on earlier démarches concerning fraudulent travel requests involving Ugandan officials or individuals falsely claiming official status.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued the rollout of the Integrated Foreign Affairs System (IFAS), a digital platform requiring all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to submit official travel requests electronically. The system enables the Ministry to verify and approve such requests centrally, with the aim of improving transparency and reducing fraud.

## **4. Challenges**

The principal challenge remains the limited capacity of consular sections to respond to sustained and growing demand.

Member States anticipate a further increase in Schengen visa applications in 2026, partly linked to the broader international context, including tighter visa restrictions affecting Ugandan nationals in certain third countries, notably the United States. While the full impact of these measures was not yet visible in 2025, it is expected to translate into higher demand for Schengen visas during 2026.

At the same time, Member States reported a rise in fraudulent documentation, including forged bank statements, employment letters, and civil-status documents. This development is likely to require increased scrutiny and may lengthen processing times.

To address these concerns, a specialised training on fraud detection will be organised in March 2026 by ConsulAssist for consular staff of Member States present in Uganda.

## **5. Other issues**

No major additional issues were identified in 2025. Nevertheless, Member States agreed on the importance of maintaining proactive coordination in order to anticipate emerging challenges.

Particular attention will be required for:

- the expected increase in visa demand linked to global travel trends and evolving visa regimes in third countries;
- the progressive implementation of the Entry/Exit System (EES) and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS), which may have indirect effects on travel patterns and public expectations;
- the operational implications of the forthcoming EU visa strategy, including possible adjustments in procedures, communication, and risk management approaches at local level.

Close coordination and continued exchange of good practices within the LSC will remain essential to ensure consistent and effective implementation.



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN  
AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

25 / 02/ 2026

## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN THE UNITED KINGDOM (LONDON)**

### **2025 REPORT**

#### **1. Introduction**

All 27 EU Member States have continued to be represented in the United Kingdom/UK in 2024, together with Schengen Associated Countries (NO, IS, CH – except LI which is represented in Schengen and consular matters by CH). There are 11 EU-MS (DE, IE, ES, FR, HR, IT, HU, PL, PT, RO) represented through Consulates General or Career Consular Offices outside of London (Belfast/ Northern Ireland, Edinburgh/ Scotland, Cardiff/ Wales, Manchester and Birmingham /England). NO, CH, IS are present only in London.

Several Schengen MS collaborate with external service providers (ESPs), including VFS Global, TLS, etc., for the purpose of collection of visa applications. In addition to the aforementioned locations where MS are physically present, other MS are represented through external service providers in the same locations, as well as in Birmingham (centre of England).

Apart from those joining in person, the LSC meetings continue to be attended by Member States' career consulates outside of London as well, via EEAS WebEx platform, allowing for a sustained hybrid collaboration and information sharing throughout the year.

#### **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

The EU Delegation continued to ensure chairing and coordination of LSC meetings throughout 2025, meeting three (3) times per year, in a hybrid format that permitted attendance of MS from across the UK, with an emphasis on in-person attendance of MS in London.

The meetings were well attended, with an average attendance of 85% for the year and most MS maintaining high engagement level of 75-100% attendance rates, largely unchanged/ slightly higher compared to 2024. The EU Delegation continued to encourage 100% attendance rates and maintained a high level of engagement between LSC meetings via e-mails. The EU Delegation has also noticed and encouraged the high levels of information and good practices sharing in writing and orally between MS in 2025, generating input/ topics for the agenda,

additional engagement with the UK authorities in the face of the UK's immigration system changes, which introduced new digital visa schemes and electronic travel authorisation (ETA) practices relevant for EU and Schengen associated nationals.

To support representation and information sharing, regular updates to the correspondence list are ensured at EUDEL level, whilst meeting summaries, consultations and guidance materials are distributed to the group as necessary. EUDEL continued to support the LSC network by compiling meeting reports that are submitted for comments to the group, proposing discussion topics, organising structured consultations, etc. Data collection of visa statistics is ensured yearly, and is coordinated - as customary (through agreement in the group) -with one of the Schengen MS (with Sweden continuing looking after this for LSC UK in 2025).

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

During 2025 the volume of visa applications remained relatively stable compared to 2024, with a predicted increase in applications following the accession of BG and RO to the Schengen area. There have been no outstanding challenges compared to previous years in the implementation of the Visa Code, with MS engaging in active exchanges and conversations on the best ways to utilise resources when confronted with limited capacity for processing visas. As previously, visa shopping remains a phenomenon that is closely monitored and that is prompting MS to trial periodically new measures that deter such practices. Visa appointment 'scalping' for profit by third party intermediaries has been less prominent as a topic raised in LSC meetings in 2025, compared to previous years, but EUDEL UK continues to engage w/ EU-MS periodically in monitoring the issue.

One of the main topics of 2025 remained the UK's accelerated process to fully digitise its border management and immigration systems, drawing comparisons with EU's EES and ETIAS and prompted regular updates from EUDEL to MS via e-mail.

The EES also featured as a topic of discussion in all three LSC meetings in 2025, with EUDEL providing regular updates from DG HOME, but no extensive uptake in UK citizens' queries about these topics was noted by MS in meetings. Instead, many MSs signalled that they face challenges in processing family member visa requests when dealing with verification of non-EU documentation of births/ marriages that are not registered with the MS authorities, of various forms of proof of visitation, and of medical or governmental proof for adult dependency claims. A number of MSs noted concerns about abuse of the facilitations by persons either not meeting the criteria for privileged treatment or not applying in the MS responsible for handling the application (based on the applicant's planned itinerary). Some MSs also noted that a high proportion of the applications they receive are from family members (one MS explained that it receives c. 700 new applications daily, of which up to 50 can be from family members).

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

While there has already been significant harmonization of practices regarding supporting documents requested for Schengen visa applications made in the UK, further discussions in LSC in 2025 have been beneficial to address specific cases such as the aforementioned practices and challenges in providing services to MS family members who are non-MS, non-UK nationals.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

EUDEL continued to reiterate, where necessary, the benefits of issuing MEVs with a progressively longer validity to frequent bona fide travellers, underlining that this is mutually beneficial for applicants and for consular services, reducing over time the volume of applications.

The figures for 2025 compared to 2024 continued to reflect an overall steady demand and output of MEVs. However, at the time of writing this report the data collection for 2025 has not been finalised by MS for Q4 and a direct comparison is not possible. The data gathered to date however indicates that the number of MEVs issued in 2025 has surpassed the number issued in 2024 only by 1,000 additional MEVs issued. Overall, the number of visas applied for, even in the absence of full data for Q4 2025 has increased slightly to 364, 000 for the same period (Q3 2024 compared to Q3 2025).

Overall, MS are following closely the Visa Code and the cascade rules regarding MEVs issuance, with EU Delegation continuing to raise awareness and monitor, as noted above, the rates of issuance and refusals of this category.

Discussions are ongoing in LSC regarding the possibility of adopting a Commission Implementing Decision on the specific rules on issuing multiple-entry visas under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

Exchanges on travelling trends, visa shopping counteractions, ESP performance indicators etc., that can help mitigate common concerns and booking shortages as well as ensuring family member visa access in line with the Visa Code have been regular agenda topics in LSC meetings for 2025.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

The 2025 LSC meetings permitted a wide exchange of information on trends and ongoing developments such as EES/ ETIAS systems and expected knock-on effects for UK visa sections

and consular assistance that may be required for non-EU travellers. The UK is particularly impacted by the EES due to the large volumes of traffic between the EU and UK, and due to the 'juxtaposed' controls carried out by France on UK soil for Eurostar, Channel ferry and Eurotunnel travellers.

While the focus on capacity issues remains diminished due to MS receiving reinforcements from capitals or boosting capacity at the local level in their visa section, this topic has remained a regular item of monitoring.

Within the LSC, there remains a good collaboration in the gathering and sharing of data on visa issuance, with regular statistics being collected by a member of the group. The LSC continued to ensure data collections throughout Q1-4, normally through a yearly rotation by a MS so as to ensure a fair burden sharing of tasks (Sweden, who coordinated the data collection in 2022, 2023, and 2024, has taken on the task for an additional year, with a decision on who will continue to ensure the data collection in 2026 in the LSC upcoming meetings).

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

n/a

## **4. Challenges**

As noted in the previous reporting period, MS are seeing a significant increase in applications for family member visas. These are being monitored carefully by MS together with EUDEL, the latter promoting good practices sharing and encouraging local coordination to streamline applications as per the Visa Code rights of these applicants as well as to determine the documentation necessary to prove the applicant is travelling with or to meet an EU family member.

## **5. Other issues**

The EU Delegation held several ad-hoc meetings with t h e UK's Home Office Visa and Immigration representatives on the roll-out for EU/EEA citizens of the Electronic Travel Authorisation system and introduction of new eVisas for visitors, in the context of Local Consular Cooperation meetings.

**Final Note:** This content of this report has been consulted with Member States locally before being finalised.



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

4 March 2026

## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN WASHINGTON, D.C. 2025 REPORT**

### **1. Introduction**

All EU Member States are present in Washington, D.C., as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland (Schengen Associated Countries). Since U.S. citizens do not need visas for short stays in the Schengen area, the issuance of Schengen visas is generally limited to third-country nationals legally staying in the US.

For the purpose of LSC in Washington D.C., Denmark, and Finland are represented by their consular posts in other locations in the US (e.g. New York City, San Francisco). Liechtenstein is represented by Switzerland for LSC purposes. Some consulates (e.g. Luxembourg) issue visas for third-country nationals residing outside the U.S. due to non-representation in certain countries. Some consulates centralise the issuance of visas outside of Washington D.C. (e.g. Lithuania issues all Schengen visas in Chicago) while others operate in Washington DC but have consulates also in other locations in the U.S. Consulates of some Member States represent other Member States for visa issuance purposes (e.g. Lithuanian General Consulate in Chicago issues Schengen visas for Switzerland, Consulate General of Austria in Los Angeles issues Schengen visas for Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia for applicants residing in some U.S. states, while residents of Florida have the option to apply at the Consulate of the Netherlands, which represents Luxembourg for visa matters there).

As far as the externalisation of visa procedures are concerned, Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta (only for processing long term visas via the pertinent authority in the capital; Schengen-visas are processed in-house in the Embassy of Malta), The Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Slovenia, as well as Norway and Iceland, are working with VFS; the Consulates General of Croatia in New York and Los Angeles are also using the services of VFS, while Germany, Slovakia, and Spain are working with BLS. France is working with TLS.

### **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

Two formal LSC meetings were held in 2025 in hybrid format with participation from consulates across the U.S. (New York, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, as well as from consulates/embassies in Washington DC). In addition, the LSC met once in a task force format to exchange on experiences and best practices on the use of external service providers to

facilitate the processing and issuing of visas. These meetings were very well attended both on the side of the EU Member States and from the Schengen Associated Countries. The EU Delegation chaired the meetings and drew up the report.

There is no systematic coordination of the Schengen cooperation outside of Washington D.C. but a new practice was put in place during the pandemic with remote participation of Member States' representatives from other U.S. locations (New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Atlanta, Los Angeles and San Francisco). As this proved very popular among the LSC participants, this practice continued in 2025.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Representatives in the LSC meeting noted a relatively stable situation concerning the number of visa applications with an expectation that the total number of visa applications from the U.S. will decrease in 2025 compared to the previous year. No participants noted a significant increase in the number of Russian nationals applying for visas. In terms of new trends, participants highlighted an increasing interest in Schengen visas from: a). third country citizens with B1/B2 visa in the U.S.; b). individuals currently benefitting from a Temporary Protected Status in the U.S.; c). holders of a valid refugee status in the EU who are interested to return there. Participants indicated as well that the number of asylum seekers contacting the consulates has been on the rise, with individuals reporting lost documents. Waiting times ranged from immediate appointments to up to 5 weeks. The public availability of visa appointment slots by Member State was pointed to as encouraging visa shopping; combined with the presentation of false justifications for visa applications, it partially explains the differences in Member States' visa refusal rates. Regarding the statistical reporting of the multiple entry visa category, participants pointed to divergent practices that makes comparability of data difficult.

Continuing an initiative launched in 2024, the LSC convened also an ad-hoc meeting to exchange experiences on outsourcing practices, highlighting both improvements and persistent challenges. Participants reported varied results with service providers, citing issues such as delays, communication gaps, technical errors, and staff turnover, though some noted progress through stricter monitoring and IT tools.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

LSC participants agreed to continue discussions on the revision of the common list of supporting documents, already discussed in 2024 at the LSC level, in a future meeting.

#### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

The new multiple visa cascade scheme entered into force in July 2025. Participants have not signalled any difficulties (except the statistical reporting of multiple entry visas, see point 3.1).

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

See point 3.1.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

The LSC exchanged views on the local collection of visa statistics as well as the correct application of the exchange rates to visa fees by external service providers. See also point 3.1.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

N/A

## **4. Challenges**

See point 3.

## **5. Other issues**

Among other issues raised in the LSC meetings, participants exchanged on the U.S. requirement to notify or seek authorization before engaging with external service providers and on developments regarding the treatment of passports with X gender identifiers by the U.S. authorities. Participants discussed also broader policy updates, including the new EU Emergency Travel Document, the rollout of the Entry/Exit System and ETIAS, and U.S. proposals of duration-limited student and journalist visas.



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN UZBEKISTAN**  
**2025 REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

In 2025, 12 EU Member States (BG, CZ, DE, ES, FR, GR, HU, IT, LV, PL, RO, SK) and 1 Schengen Member State (CH) were present in Uzbekistan. ES, GR and CH did not issue visas. DE represented SE. FR represented BG, NL, PT, LU and IS. HU represented AT and DK. IT represented MT, NO and SI. LV represented CH and EE. The total number of represented countries was 13. MS were not represented outside of the capital.

**2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

LSC meetings in 2025 took place three times, on 30 May, 25 September and 22 October. The meetings were chaired by the Head of Political, Press and Information Section of the EU Delegation who also drafted the reports, that were approved by MS in a silence procedure. All meetings were very well attended. The European Return Liaison Officer deployed to Uzbekistan (covering also Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) also regularly attended LSC meetings. Guest speakers were invited to some meetings (SE migration authorities, FRONTEX).

**3. State of play**

**3.1.1 Application of the Visa Code**

As previously, there was a high number of applications supported by Note Verbales which are often submitted at the last moment without due respect to procedures and the timing necessary for the processing of visa applications. This put heavy burden on consular officials. Requests for visas though a Note Verbale were on the rise and not all persons included in the requests were related to the public service or travelling on an official visit.

MS discussed and introduced improvements into the cooperation with external service providers – visa application centers, to address complaints about long waiting times and allegations of corruption.

LSC exchanged information about unreliable travel agencies.

Abuse of Schengen visas for traveling to the US has led to the introduction of airport transit visas in several MS (BE, ES, FR, IT, PT, RO).

LSC was briefed about the introduction of EES (see point 3.6) and plans to introduce ETIAS.

### **3.1.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The harmonised list of supporting documents was approved by Commission decision no C(2014) 6141. LSC did not consider an update of the list was necessary as its application is satisfactory.

### **3.3. Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

LSC confirms the application of the provisions of the Visa Code for the issuance of multiple entry visas.

#### **3.4.1 Harmonisation of practices**

EU Heads of Mission and LSC considered facilitating Schengen visa applications for Erasmus+ students, with support letters from National Erasmus Office.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Exchange of information within the LSC was regular. MS often consult among themselves on various issues related to visa issuance by e-mail or through a Telegram group. The exchange of information related to individual cases is done on Vismail.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

EUDEL and MS conducted an EEA information campaign. Initially, the announcement on the new Entry/Exit System (EES) was published on EUDEL website by the StratCom team. It was subsequently translated into Uzbek and Russian and uploaded to the same webpage. The information was also shared across social media channels.

All posters, flyers, and infographics were translated into Uzbek, printed in both English and Uzbek (50 copies per language), and distributed to EU Member State Embassies so they could display them on their premises and share them with visitors. In addition, all materials - both digital and printed - were forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan for further dissemination among travel companies, border points, trade unions, and exporters.

The announcement was circulated to local media outlets in Uzbek and Russian. During this process, a misinformation incident occurred involving the Podrobno.uz media outlet, which incorrectly reported that “Citizens of Uzbekistan will no longer need a Schengen visa in their passports.”. The article was corrected upon EUDEL intervention and the incorrect version was removed from the website.

EUDEL also arranged a television interview for Renaissance TV to explain the the Entry/Exit System for the people of Uzbekistan. The interview was broadcast on television in Tashkent and in the regions and further disseminated via multiple social media platforms.

#### **4. Challenges**

Following the signature of the EU-Uzbekistan EPCA on 24 October 2025, Uzbek authorities increased their outreach to start negotiations on the Visa Facilitation Agreement. The immediate task would be to direct discussions towards address jointly with the host country persistent visa irritants, without creating an impression of the start of a “pre-negotiation” phase.

Most MS visa sections face shortage of staff in relation to the numbers of visa applications.

#### **5. Other issues**

The implementation of existing bilateral readmission agreements was discussed. Successful implementation of readmission agreements is usually coupled with the existence of legal channels for migration, and hampered by long waiting times for issuing visas and high visa refusal rates.

*Author: Renata Wróbel*

*approved by MS by silence procedure on 6 March 2026*



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO VIETNAM

## LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN HANOI, VIETNAM 2025 REPORT

### 1. Introduction

18 EU Member States, together with NO and CH, are represented in Hanoi.

DE, FR, HU, IT NL and CH have Consul Generals in Ho Chi Minh city.

12 MS have Honorary Consuls (HC) in HCMC (BE, CY, CZ, EE, ES, FI, EL, LT, MT, AT, RO, SK)

2 MS have HC in Hanoi (LV, LT)

1 MS has HC in Haiphong (CZ)

1 MS in Danang (ES).

Several member states have engaged with private companies (Visa Facilitation Services - VFS) to handle the receipt of visa applications, including recording biometric data.

### 2. LSC meetings held in 2025

- In 2025, EUDEL held 4 regular meetings chaired by EUDEL. Reporting is also done by EUDEL.
- All meetings have been well-attended and the level of coordination is generally excellent.
- Consuls residing outside of Hanoi are always invited to join by video link but only a few tend to join.

### 3. State of play

#### 3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The Visa Code is strictly applied.

No specific problem relating to the implementation of the Visa Code was brought to the attention of the group.

### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

*For the locations where work on this has not been completed*

The Harmonised List was reviewed in 2022. The LSC group is informed that the approved list is mandatory and must be advertised on the MS embassies' websites. It has been implemented and no particular issue has been raised. It will be reviewed again in 2026.

### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code ('MEV cascades')**

MS have adapted to the general rules for issuing MEV.

### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

No particular problems were flagged.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

During 2025, the LSC meetings allowed participants to share relevant updates and were a platform to exchange information on basic visa-related statistics and trends, Emergency Travel Document issuance, and other general issues. Information exchange was also conducted on an ad hoc basis by email or in a dedicated WhatsApp group.

The local European Return Liaison Officer (EURLO) spoke at a meeting about illegal immigration, human trafficking and document forgery.

The preliminary implementation of the new Entry/Exit system has been discussed, with no issues noted.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

None.

## **4. Challenges**

Assessing attempts at illegal migration, especially verification of documentation and information provided by visa applicants, continues to be the biggest challenge for MS. A few embassies have national police officers in situ dealing with this and even then it remains a challenge.

## 5. Other issues

There were no other specific issues of note.

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN APPROVED BY MEMBER STATES PRESENT IN VIETNAM



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO ZAMBIA**

## **LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN ZAMBIA**

### **2025 REPORT**

#### **1. Introduction**

8 EU MS (FR, DE, IT, CZ, SE, FI, IE, HU) are resident in Lusaka. Only DE, IT and CZ issue Schengen visas locally. HU office is at the level of Chargé d’Affaires, temporarily closed until the arrival of a new diplomat.

DE represents HU, AT and SI. IT represents EL, MT and SK.

SE issues visas through its regional hub in Nairobi using an external service provider (VFS).

SE represent 13 other Schengen countries from Nairobi: BE, DK, EE, FI, IS, LV, LU, NL, NO, PL, PT, ES and CH.

FR issues visas through its Consulate General in Johannesburg using an external service provider (Capago).

Since September 2024, BG has signed an agreement with VFS to facilitate visa applications for travellers, including Zambian passport holders.

Other MS are accredited from Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Nairobi and Pretoria. There are no EU consulates in other Zambian cities.

#### **2. LSC meetings held in 2025**

There were two well-attended LSC meetings in 2025, in April and November 2025. Meetings are hybrid to ensure coordination with non-resident MS.

The EU also hosted a meeting between EU HoMs and Honorary Consuls in September 2025.

In December 2025, the EU Delegation with HQ support hosted a Consular Exercise where all resident MS participated, many non-resident MS consular officers joined the meeting online.

### **3. State of play**

#### **3.1 Application of the Visa Code**

Some MS reported “visa shopping” issues. Visa shopping seems to have increased due to the fact that only 3 MS issue visas locally and their timelines are different. Applicants reportedly approach MS that do not issue visas locally and, once informed of the need to refer to the local outsourcing office (which entails a significant additional processing cost), proceed to change their planning. Visa shopping is seen in tourism visa applications as well as business and official visas.

#### **3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents**

The harmonised list of supporting documents is being implemented by EU MS in Lusaka. MS underlined that it remains a living document, requiring regular updates. They also reported adapting the requirements based on the applicant’s individual circumstances and travel history.

One MS reported mismatches among the requirements established by MS with regard to, for example, marriage certificate requirements.

Lack of specimens provided by the Zambian protocol remains a challenge.

#### **3.3 Assessment of the need to adapt the general rules on issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants under Article 24(2) of the Visa Code (‘MEV cascades’)**

MS reported that the rule on issuing visas according to Art. 24(2) is being implemented in accordance to the guidelines, without specific rules for Zambia.

Another MS reported that no specific local cascade is in force for issuing visas with long validity period and multiple entries for Zambian citizens, but the issue is under consideration.

#### **3.4 Harmonisation of practices**

No other activities to report.

### **3.5 Exchange of information**

Information is shared during LSC meetings on statistics, cases of fraud, cooperation with local authorities and the issue of external providers, among others. Other issues discussed included knowledge-sharing on handling cases of detention of EU citizens and consular protection, cases of over-staying of visa-free period.

### **3.6 Any other initiative taken in LSC**

The EU also coordinated a meeting between EU MS consuls and the Director of Protocol at the Zambian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was carried out in February 2025.

## **4. Challenges**

Several MS reported challenges linked to last-minute visa applications for high-level visits and large accompanying delegations, which leave insufficient time for proper processing. The resulting pressure on consular services creates unnecessary tension and, in some instances, has led to inaccurate media reporting regarding EU Member States' visa rejection policies.

MS reported that participants in high-level visits frequently alter their travel plans after visas have already been issued, leading to requests for revisions. In addition, the composition of delegations often changes at short notice, creating confusion when visa applications no longer correspond to the official Note Verbale.

MS also reported receiving questionable certificates from government authorities.

MS noted extremely limited knowledge on the rules of the Visa Code by the majority of applicants.

## **5. Other issues**

No other issues to report.

---