

INFORMATION
LEAFLET
NO. 7

UNITED

THROUGH THE BORDERS

This leaflet offers advice on how to more easily get visas for travel around Europe to meetings and conferences. The information inside is intended for organisations rather than individuals and is particularly aimed at people from Central and Eastern Europe who want to travel to Western Europe. Western Europeans will also find it useful, especially if they wish to invite delegates from Central and Eastern Europe to a meeting, when they will need to issue an official invitation. We have not included information about holiday or private visas.

REMEMBER!

The situation changes very quickly - it can be different each time an application for a visa is made. UNITED advises you that laws and requirements can change and the information we offer in this leaflet is intended to give guidelines only. Please check with the relevant authorities before planning your travel.

UNITED welcomes receiving your corrections and supplementary information.

CONTENTS:

- Information on applying for non-private visas
- Sample invitation letter
- Complete matrix of all European embassies in all European countries, including telephone and telefax numbers
- Table of all countries, indicating visa status for entering the European Union

How to avoid bureaucratic hurdles when applying for a visa

UNITED FOR INTERCULTURAL ACTION

EUROPEAN NETWORK AGAINST NATIONALISM, RACISM, FASCISM AND IN SUPPORT OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

DO YOU NEED A VISA?

EUROPE CAN GENERALLY BE DIVIDED IN THREE SECTIONS:

A

WESTERN EUROPE

all EU countries plus Norway, Switzerland....

Citizens of these countries do not need visas for A and B but will need visas for C

B

CENTRAL EUROPE

Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia....

Citizens of these countries may need visas for A and B and may need vouchers for C

C

EASTERN EUROPE

Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine....

Citizens of these countries will need visas for A and B, and vouchers for C

These tables assume that you are a citizen of a European country and holding a European passport. People living in Europe but with a non-European passport should check their visa requirements very carefully.

* Some states of the former Yugoslavia are not listed here.

Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and the Republic of Macedonia are not recognised by all member states of the EU.

Citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina may need a visa to enter some EU states.

APPLYING FOR NON-PRIVATE VISAS

* Apply for your visa at least 4 weeks in advance. For some countries, you may need about 7-8 weeks to obtain the visa.

* Telephone the embassy in advance to find out:

- opening hours of the embassy (especially if it is not in your city)
- how much the visa will cost
- how long it will take to process your application
- if you have to apply personally. For a EU-visa, you must apply in person at the embassy
- which documents are needed (take care that your documents are valid):
 - application form (you get it usually in the embassy)
 - your international passport (sometimes the national one too), valid for at least 3 months (sometimes longer) after expiry date of the visa
 - photographs - usually 2, sometimes 3 or 4
 - invitation letter from the inviting organisation
 - a 'guarantee declaration' (at least for the EU) (see below)
 - medical insurance (not always necessary)
 - the fee
 - (proof of return ticket)

*Remember, the embassy official who deals with your application decides if you will get the visa. A first impression can be important. Dress well and be polite. The official may make a short interview to get to know you better (often they ask where you or your parents live, what you are studying etc.). They want to be sure that you will return. Sometimes women are asked if they are going abroad to marry.

* EU countries are now very strict to those who want to enter their territory. They want to ensure that all visitors are able to pay for their accommodation and food, or at least that somebody will

guarantee it, and that everybody who enters also leaves the country again. Embassies demand proof of a return ticket with a fixed date of return - but airlines won't sell tickets without the visa!

* **Are you travelling to Eastern Europe?** Some embassies will speed up the application process if you are in a hurry, but they will charge more (up to double the price). You may authorise somebody to deposit your application in the embassy and to pick up your passport with the visa. Applications by mail can take several weeks longer.

TRANSIT VISAS

If you need to cross a country which requires a visa, you need special permission. Transit countries often cause more problems than the receiving country. Check the regulations for transit visas with the countries concerned, and note the following points:

- * **Transit visas must be bought in advance before you leave your country.** They are cheaper than ordinary visas and are usually easy to get, if you can show the (transit) embassy the visa for your destination-country. Allow plenty of time to apply for them.
- * **If there is no definitive need to give you transit permission, you will be refused.** For example if you are Romanian and are going to Germany, there is no reason to go via Austria, because you can easily travel via the Czech Republic (no visa required). So Austria will probably refuse a transit-visa.

VOUCHERS

Voucher agreements exist between eastern European countries and between eastern European and central European countries. If your country has an agreement with another country that a voucher is sufficient for crossing the border, you don't need a visa to enter. You can just buy a voucher (but you may still need an invitation).

- * **You can buy vouchers in railway or bus stations, in travel agencies and sometimes directly at the border.**
- * **If you have a visa for a western country, you do not need vouchers for the countries you have to cross (but you may need transit visas).** For example, if you are from Ukraine and you cross Poland on your way to Germany, you only need your German visa.

THE SCHENGEN TREATY

The Schengen Treaty is an agreement between Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain (EU-members) and permits since 26 March 1995 free movement for everybody between these countries.

Schengen makes travel in these countries easier for everybody - including foreigners. If you have a visa for one country, it will usually include automatic permission to cross all Schengen-borders. But check that a Schengen country really is opening its borders. Don't forget that border controls still take place. The national application processes remain the same. But the Schengen countries have already focused on an adjustment of national differences to a European standard. This means:

- Entry requirements will be standardised.
- Visa costs will be fixed at a standardised level .
- You must stay at home at least as long as you stayed last time in a Schengen country (up to a maximum of 3 months), before you can apply again for a common Schengen visa.

ISSUING OFFICIAL INVITATIONS

* **The invitation must be a formal letter written in your own language.** Explain briefly the purpose of your organisation and your event. Type the invitation clearly on your organisation's official writing paper. The invitation should convince that there is a powerful organisation behind the project with a noble aim, especially if sponsored by politicians, your government or an important institution.

* **Invitations must include all the following information:**

-name of delegate's organisation and telefax number
-name of delegate
-nationality
-passport number
-private address
-date and place of birth

and information on the conference, including title, place, dates and sponsors.

* **Delegates should inform the hosting organisation as early as possible what their visa requirements or problems could be, particularly if they hold a non-European passport.** Delegates should also send quickly the telefax number of the embassy where they will apply for the visa.

* **The invitation must come from the country where an event takes place and not from the country where the organisers are based.** Invitations carry more weight if issued by the Ministry of Youth or Interior Ministry of a country on behalf of your organisation. If this is not possible, then invitations are always better from a NGO or institution rather than a private individual.

* **Issue the invitation as early as possible as a visa application takes on average about 1 month to process the paperwork.** Fax a copy of the invitation, with a letter of urgency to facilitate the process, to the relevant embassy and send the invitation and letter directly by express mail to your guest also. You may also wish to send the embassy some information about your organisation. Remember that delegates may still need to queue daily at the embassy, which is difficult for the delegate if they are working. Also, delegates may have to prove they have paid their rent and bills etc before they can go to the embassy, or get official permission to leave the country.

* **You may find it useful to contact the embassy representative after issuing the invitation to ask them for the administration number of the visa application by the participant.** This will help speed up any enquiries if there are any problems with issuing the visa.

* **Different embassies of a particular country can have different attitudes to giving out info on requirements.** Often an embassy can give conflicting or inaccurate information. Contact the Interior Ministry of the country and ask for written information on entry requirements rather than the embassy. The Ministry will provide up to date information on the legal situation.

THE GUARANTEE DECLARATION

* A 'guarantee declaration' is an official letter by the hosting organisation which promises to take care of all medical and living expenses (and maybe return travel costs) and should be included with an invitation. It is almost always necessary if you are inviting someone to visit a country belonging to the European Union.

* The guarantee declaration must be written on the official writing paper of your organisation, it must assure the official status of your organisation and its capability of financing the stay of the delegate. Western Europeans going east only need an invitation. Eastern Europeans (especially from Bulgaria, Romania, ex-Soviet Union) going west need an invitation plus a guarantee declaration. This is only valid if it is an original document, so it must be sent by mail.

* **Central and East the border if they do not have enough cash.** This may not be necessary if there is a guarantee declaration. Sometimes the receiving country will insist on a sum of money that can represent many months' wages in Central and Eastern Europe. Conversely, there may be currency restrictions in the country of departure, which limits the amount to be taken out to \$100 or similar.

REMEMBER....

* To allow plenty of time to issue the invitation and apply for the visa (at least 4 weeks).

* To provide all necessary information and documents to embassy officials.

AND FINALLY.....GOOD LUCK!

SAMPLE OF INVITATION LETTER

UNITED for Intercultural Action

European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and
in support of migrants and refugees

Dutch Embassy
visa section
Red Square 47
Moscow

via fax +7-987-6543



6/12/95

Dear Sirs,

Visa application Ms. Anna Leninova

United for Intercultural Action, Europe's biggest anti-racist network with 350 supporting organisations, is organising from 13 to 20 January 1996, a big European conference: European Youth - United actions against racism and nationalism. The conference is supported by Helmut Schmidt MEP, and will take place at the Anywhere conference hall, Amsterdam.

Ms. Anna Leninova (born 25/05/65, Russian nationality) of the organisation Anti Racist Committee of Moscow has been accepted by us to participate in this conference.

Ms Anna Leninova
Anti Racist Committee of Moscow
fax no. +7-123-4567

Private address
Ulitsa Pasternak 16
RUS-123456 Moscow
Russia

Passport no. DX 057368
Date of Birth: 25.05.65
Place of Birth: Moscow
Nationality: Russian

All costs for board and lodging and travel will be paid for by UNITED.

Could you therefore please facilitate her entrance in the Netherlands by issuing a visa for the Netherlands. She will apply for this visa in the next weeks.

For any questions relating to the conference in Amsterdam, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thanking you in advance,

Piet Janssen - Director

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AMBASSY MATRIX

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TABLE OF ALL COUNTRIES, INDICATING VISA STATUS FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

EU common visa list agreed on 25 September 1995	Cape Verde Central African Republic Chad China Comoros Congo Côte d'Ivoire Cuba Djibouti Dominican Republic Egypt Equatorial Guinea Eritrea Ethiopia Fiji Gabon The Gambia Georgia Ghana Guinea Guinea Bissau Guyana Haiti India Indonesia Iran Iraq Jordan Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan	Kuwait Laos Lebanon Liberia Libya Madagascar Maldives Mali Mauritania Mauritius Moldavia Mongolia Morocco Mozambique Myanmar Nepal Niger Nigeria North Korea Oman Pakistan Papua New Guinea Peru Philippines Qatar Romania Russia Rwanda São Tomé and Príncipe Saudi Arabia	Senegal Sierra Leone Somalia Sri Lanka Sudan Suriname Syria Tajikistan Tanzania Thailand Togo Tunisia Turkey Turkmenistan Uganda Ukraine United Arab Emirates Uzbekistan Vietnam Yemen Zaire Zambia
101 countries, compared with 129 on the list proposed by the Commission (which was based on the list used by the Schengen countries). 28 countries have been removed from the Commission list, but one country, Peru, has been added.			plus three "entities not recognised as states by all Member States" (of the EU): Taiwan, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (defined as: "Serbia and Montenegro").

Countries on the Schengen visa list but not on EU list:	Bahamas Barbados Belize Botswana Dominica Grenada Kiribati Lesotho Marshall Islands Antigua and Barbuda	Namibia Nauru Northern Mariana Islands St Christopher and Nevis St Vincent and Grenadines Santa Lucia Samoa (Western) Seychelles Solomon Islands Micronesia	Swaziland Tonga Trinidad and Tobago Trust territory of the Pacific Islands (Palau) Tuvalu Vanuatu Zimbabwe
28 countries have been left off the original list proposed by the Commission which was the same as the Schengen visa list:			Source: comparison of agreed list with original proposal

The so-called "white list" of 17 countries exempt from having to obtain visa under the Schengen list, the Commission proposal and the EU list:	Andorra Canada Czech Republic Hungary Iceland Japan Liechtenstein	Malta Monaco New Zealand Norway San Marino Slovakia South Korea	Switzerland USA Vatican
			(Austria, Finland and Sweden were on the list but are now EU member states). Source: Schengen list and Commission's unpublished "white list"

28 countries which are not on the EU list, the Schengen list, or the "white list" which may need visa to enter some EU states.	Bolivia Bosnia Brazil Brunei Cyprus Colombia Costa Rica Argentina Australia	El Salvador Guatemala Honduras Israel Jamaica Kenya Malaysia Malawi Mexico	Nicaragua Panama Poland Singapore Slovenia Uruguay Venezuela
			Source: Schengen list

Schengen countries: Countries operating the Schengen Agreement and the computerised Schengen Information System	(SIS): Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Portugal, Spain, France (has opted out at least until the end of 1995)	Agreement but have not ratified it and who, in addition, need to introduce data protection legislation: Greece, Italy, Countries which have signed the	Join: Austria (has observer status), Denmark (has observer status), Sweden, Finland. Countries outside the Schengen Agreement: UK, Ireland.
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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

UNITED is supported by:
 more than 350 organisations from all European countries, the European Commission, the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe, the Barrow Cadbury Trust, Buntstift, many prominent individuals and many private supporters and volunteers.



EUROPEAN YOUTH FOUNDATION

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