

Europe at the dawn of the biometric era...

The European Union is gradually introducing so-called biometric data into both passports and visas.

These are specific characteristics that make it possible to distinguish one person from another.

**You want a visa for the Schengen area ...
How? Why? What's different?**

We answer your questions!

What will an application for a biometric visa consist of?

When you apply for a Schengen visa, all ten fingerprints and – in some Belgian representations – a digital photo will be taken on the spot.

This procedure usually only takes two minutes.

Should I still bring a printed photo?

Yes, a printed photo is still required to open a visa application file.

In Belgian representations where it is not possible to take a photo on the spot, your printed photo will be scanned as in the past.

I am a bona fide traveller ... Why am I required to give my fingerprints?

Fingerprinting will gradually become part of the normal procedure for any application for a visa to the Schengen area.

All applicants for short-term visas – except for some predefined cases – will soon be required to provide them, whatever their nationality or the Schengen representation at which they apply.

What is the advantage for me in providing biometric data?

Collecting your biometric data has several advantages:

- it guarantees your identification as the one and only holder of the visa;
- it protects you against falsification or theft of your identity (if your passport is stolen, for example);
- in the longer term it will allow you to cross borders faster.

Your fingerprints will be taken



Do my children have to give their fingerprints too?

Over the age of twelve your children will have to be fingerprinted and photographed, too. Children under the age of twelve do not have to be fingerprinted but we do have to take their photo¹.

Please remember to bring a printed photo in all cases.

A photo will be taken on the spot²



Will my biometric data be well protected?

Every effort has been made to ensure maximum protection of all the data collected.

Furthermore, the processing and consultation of this data will be subject to Belgian and European law concerning the protection of, and access to, personal data.

- ¹ children under 12 must also attend in person for a visa application.
- ² failing that, a printed photo will be scanned.

What about border checks?

When you arrive at a Belgian border you will be invited to place your fingers on a fingerprint scanner. In order to definitely identify you these will be compared within a few seconds to those taken when you applied for a visa.

Do not forget, though, that a visa does not absolutely guarantee you entry to a territory and that you may be asked for certain documents at the border. For information contact the embassy or consulate of the country you are going to.

Biometrics form the basis of a huge European-wide project

The introduction of biometric data in Schengen visas is part of the preparation for a much larger project.

When all of the European diplomatic and consular posts of a region have been equipped for taking biometric data it will be possible to centralise them in a database shared by the Member States of the Schengen area.

For more detailed information please contact the embassy or consulate at which you need to apply for a visa.



This project is co-financed by the European Commission's External Borders Fund

Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs,
Foreign Trade
and Development Cooperation
Rue des Petits Carmes 15 - 1000 Brussels

Published by: Dirk Achten

The facts and figures in this publication are provided for information purposes only.
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October 2009



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Federal Public Service
Foreign Affairs,
Foreign Trade and
Development Cooperation

Your Schengen visa

