Schengen visa revolution: the Council of the EU approved the digitalisation

On Monday, November 13th, the Council of the EU approved two new regulations, soon to be published, which will completely digitalize the applications for Schengen visas, that will render the current "stickers" obsolete.

The "Foreign Affairs" composition of the Council of the European Union has approved two regulations that can be deemed revolutionary, the aim of which is to completely digitalize the process of obtaining Schengen visas (the so-called "short-term" visas). The two regulations, in fact, will:

- create an EU platform for Schengen visa applications: with few exceptions, applications will be submitted exclusively through this platform, on which applicants will be able to enter all relevant data, upload electronic copies of travel and supporting documents and pay the visa fees;

- make in-person presentation at Consulates unnecessary: the idea is that a personal visit will only be necessary for first-time applicants, persons whose biometric data are no longer valid, and persons with new travel documents;

- replace the current 'sticker' with a barcode with a cryptographic signature.

As mentioned in the introduction, we are now awaiting the publication of these regulations in the Official Journal of the European Union. These regulations will then enter into force 20 days after publication, but the applicability of their dispositions will depend on the completion of the work, both technical and infrastructural, on the visa platform and the digital visa.

This is the final step towards the functioning of the ETIAS (European Travel Information and Authorisation System), already foreseen in 2018 and theoretically active as of November 2023 (read the Alert here: ETIAS: the new "easy screening" mechanism to access the schengen area): albeit with considerable delay, the EU will consequently adopt a system similar to the ESTA, which has been used in the United States for quite some time now. The goal is that all visitors entering the EU – with a visa or visa waiver - will have to go through an automated EU entry/exit system (EES) starting from late 2024, with the ETIAS system fully functional by mid-2025.

LCA Immigration Team is available for further clarification on the matter and will keep you update about the latest developments in Italian immigration law.

CONTACTS

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