

December 2006

Pursuant to an EU Council decision of 1 June 2006, all Schengen countries will increase their fees for Schengen visas (valid for stays of up to 90 days) to EUR 60.00 as of 1 January 2007. This is still a reasonable rate when compared with the fees charged by other countries (e.g. US\$ 85.00 for a US visa, EUR 105.00 for a Canadian visa and EUR 78.00 for a UK visa).

This increase does not apply to fees for national visas (entry to Germany only, valid for more than 90 days).

It is being introduced because the previous Schengen fee of EUR 35.00 no longer covered application processing costs. The higher fee will help finance the significant investment needed to collect biometric facial and fingerprint data of all applicants. The use of biometric data will give applicants increased protection from identity theft and will additionally secure EU external borders against illegal migration and terrorism.

A considerable number of exceptions will be made to take account of our foreign policy interests vis-à-vis countries with a European perspective and countries covered by the European neighbourhood policy. The increase thus does not apply to young people and those seeking people-to-people contacts in countries directly neighbouring ours.

- Children under six years of age, school pupils and students and accompanying teachers on study or educational trips, as well as researchers, will be exempted by all Schengen states from the visa fees regardless of their nationality.
- The EU has concluded visa facilitation negotiations with Russia and Ukraine; the previous fee of EUR 35.00 will continue to apply for both countries.
- The previous fee of EUR 35.00 will also remain in force for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia (including Kosovo) during a transitional period until 1 January 2008. The EU Commission is currently holding visa facilitation negotiations with these countries, which could result in the permanent retention of this lower fee. For the time being, the lower fee will also remain in force for Moldova, since the EU Commission will receive a mandate before the end of December 2006 to open negotiations with that country too.