

GMS Flash Alert

Immigration

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European Union – New Visa “Cascade” Regime for India

Travel to the Schengen area for Indian nationals is significantly easier with the introduction of new rules that allow frequent travellers access to a longer visa period overall.

On 18 April 2024, the European Commission adopted more favourable rules for visas issued to Indian nationals residing in India.¹ The new rules, known as the visa “cascade” regime, will allow Indian nationals who reside in India to have access to long-term, multi-entry Schengen visas valid for two years after having obtained and lawfully used two visas within the previous three years. The initial two-year visa can then be followed by a five-year visa, provided that the passport has sufficient remaining validity, providing for a longer stay by the individual.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The new visa cascade regime for Indian nationals residing in India who apply for Schengen (short stay) visas in India will allow easier access to visas with longer validity for travellers with an established travel history, if the passport validity allows.

In effect, this means that the holder of the new visa would enjoy travel rights equivalent to visa-free nationals.

The new rules are expected to enhance mobility between India and Schengen-area European countries.

Context

Schengen visas allow the holder to travel freely in the Schengen area for short stays of a maximum of 90 days in any 180-day period.² Although the Schengen visa grants entry to the Schengen area, it does not grant a right to work.

The Schengen area consist of 29 European countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta,

the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

According to a press release, "This decision comes in the context of strengthened relations under the EU-India Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility, which deals with comprehensive cooperation on migration policy between the EU and India."³ The Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility was signed in 2016.⁴

New Policy

Indian nationals who held and used at least two Schengen visas within three years preceding their application, can obtain a Schengen visa for a two-year period followed by a visa for a period up to five years.

This visa allows multiple entries into the Schengen area.

MEIJBURG & CO. INSIGHTS

It is important to note that the validity of the new visa is linked to the validity of the individual's passport. Issued visas cannot have a duration that exceeds the validity of the passport it is issued for.

Parties affected by the new rules may wish to consult with their immigration counsel or a professional with the KPMG [Immigration network](#).

FOOTNOTES:

1 Delegation of the European Union to India and Bhutan, "European Union adopts more favourable Schengen visa rules for Indians," (22.04.2024) at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/india/european-union-adopts-more-favourable-schengen-visa-rules-indians_en?s=167 .

2 For more information on the Schengen area, see the EU's Migration and Home Affairs [webpage](#).

3 See footnote 1.

4 See the "Joint Declaration on a Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility" (March 2016) at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/23674/20160329-joint-declaration-camm.pdf> .

To learn more about the Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility signed in 2016, and developments since then, see:

- The International Labour Organization (ILO) [webpage](#).

- Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs "Joint Press Statement: 7th India-EU High Level Dialogue on Migration and Mobility" (October 27, 2023) at: <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/37212/Joint+Press+Statement+7th+IndiaEU+High+Level+Dialogue+on+Migration+and+Mobility> .

- The [website](#) for the Delegation of the European Union to India and Bhutan.

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Contact us

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