



Public Security  
& Identity

# A Secure Visa System for the Schengen Area



EUROPE

**Total population of the EU:**  
513 million

**Largest cities:** (Largest urban areas) Paris, Madrid, Barcelona, Rome, Berlin and Milan

**The euro (€)** is the official currency of 19 EU countries

The Schengen Area is one of the greatest achievements of the European Union. It is an area without internal borders in which citizens, business people and tourists can circulate freely without being subjected to border checks.

As the most visited region in the world, Europe welcomed over 670 million travelers in 2017 alone. Since its creation in 1995, the Schengen Area has allowed more than 500 million citizens in 31 European countries to travel freely without requesting a specific visa for each country. The Schengen Area has 11,000 km of external land borders, 43,000 km of external sea borders, 597

airports and 3,500 consular posts around the world. The biggest challenge for the EU visa management system is to provide secure entrance of non-EU visitors throughout the Schengen Area. IDEMIA's Biometric Matching System (BMS) is able to identify visa applicants by matching fingerprints to identities, therefore establishing and verifying the validity of visa applications.



## A Continent-Wide System

In order to harmonize the EU visa management throughout the Schengen Area, in 2006 the European Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs implemented the European Visa Information System (VIS). VIS is at the core of the visa application process to the Schengen Area, enabling member states to store and search alphanumeric and biometric data relating to visa applicants.

Implemented by Accenture and IDEMIA, the VIS system went live in October 2011. It has since experienced an increase of usage by consulates in non-EU countries and external border crossing points of Schengen states.

In 2013, the eu-LISA agency was created to take over the operational responsibility of the VIS from the European Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs.

In 2016, a new consortium composed of IDEMIA, Accenture and Atos was awarded the renewal of the maintenance contract for a duration of four years.

## A Reliable EU Visa Application and Issuance System

IDEMIA's BMS ensures secure visa applications by confirming that each person is issued only one visa for the Schengen Area. The BMS embeds the innovative IDEMIA product MBSS®, a multi-biometric search engine designed for high modularity and availability, combined with unparalleled speed and matching accuracy.

Consulates of Schengen member states around the world collect fingerprints, photographs and alphanumeric data from visa applicants over the age of 12, and record this information in the secure VIS database. The system performs a 1:N fingerprint matching, which compares the visa holder's fingerprints against those stored in the database, thus ensuring that there are no duplicate visa applications.

## Accurate Checks at the Border

BMS also allows the authentication of visa holders when they cross Schengen borders. At the border post, the visa holder's fingerprints are captured and checked against the biometric data stored in the system (1:1 matching). If the comparison is successful, the visa holder is allowed to enter the Schengen Area.

## Benefits

### For Europe and European Member States

- Provide travelers with assurance that their application will be thoroughly processed
- Prevent irregular immigration and identity theft
- Avoid visa shopping
- Encourage European cooperation in a complex environment



## Key Figures

- Project start date: 2006
- Database of 60 million people
- 450,000 transactions per hour
- 3,500 consular posts for visa applications
- 1,800 border posts for visa checks
- 99.99% system availability