



## PRESS RELEASE

30 May 2013

.../for immediate release

### Launch of Schengen Visa Information System on 6 June 2013

***As part of a global process of introducing the Visa Information System (VIS), the Schengen States will launch the VIS in South Africa on 6 June 2013. This follows the earlier successful implementation of the VIS in North Africa, the Near East, the Gulf region, as well as in West and Central Africa. The VIS is being rolled out gradually by region until all Schengen consulates worldwide are connected. The rollout of the VIS on 6 June in East and Southern Africa is part of its progressive worldwide deployment.***

The VIS concerns short-stay (up to three months) visas to the Schengen States. It entails the digitalised exchange of data amongst the Schengen States related to issuance of such visas, and is based on a central database. The VIS will facilitate visa application procedures and checks at external borders, and will enhance security.

The VIS will contain all the Schengen visa applications lodged by an applicant over five years and the decisions taken by any Schengen State's consulate. This will allow third country citizens to establish more easily the lawful use of previous visas and their *bona fide* status (e.g. when applying for a multiple-entry visa). Visa applicants' biometric data (fingerprints and a digital photograph) will also be registered in the VIS, so as to better protect visa applicants against identity theft and prevent false identifications, which in certain cases has led to the refusal of a visa or entry to a person who had been entitled to enter.

It is important to note that as from 6 June 2013 all visa applicants will have to appear in person when lodging an application, in order to provide their fingerprints. The procedure for collection of biometric identifiers is quick, simple and discreet. Once the biometric data have been entered in the VIS, for the following five-year period they can be copied from the previous application file in the VIS, and personal visits to the consulate may be waived.

Exemptions from the obligation of fingerprinting are provided for:

- children under the age of 12;
- persons for whom the collection of fingerprints is physically impossible;
- Heads of State and members of national Governments, with accompanying spouses, and the members of their official delegation when they are invited by Member States' governments or by international organisations for an official purpose;
- Sovereigns and other senior members of royal family, when they are invited by Member States' governments or by international organisations for an official purpose.

The VIS central database is very secure and data will be processed in accordance with the highest data protection standards. Any person will have the right to obtain information on the data related to him/her recorded in the VIS and may request that inaccurate data be corrected.

For further information please contact the consulate of the Schengen country you plan to visit:

▪ Austria	012-452-9155	▪ Italy	011-728-1392/3
▪ <b>Belgium</b>	<b>011-912-9600</b>	▪ <b>Netherlands</b>	<b>012-425-4500</b>
▪ Czech Republic	012-431-2380	▪ Poland	012-430-9622
▪ <b>Denmark</b>	<b>012-430-9340</b>	▪ <b>Portugal</b>	<b>011-622-0645</b>
▪ Finland	012-343-0275	▪ Slovakia	012-342-2051
▪ <b>France</b>	<b>087-742-2830</b>	▪ <b>Spain</b>	<b>012-460-0123</b>
▪ Germany	012-427-8974/5	▪ Sweden	012-426-6400
▪ <b>Greece</b>	<b>011-214-2300</b>	▪ <b>Norway</b>	<b>012-364-3700</b>
▪ Hungary	012-430-3030	▪ Switzerland	012-452-0662