



# Global Immigration alert

November 2024

## Switzerland

Schengen Visa applications to go fully online by 2028

### Executive summary

Switzerland is set to digitize Schengen Visa applications by 2028, aligning with the EU's new regulation requiring electronic submissions for short-term stays (up to 90 days). The Swiss Federal Council has approved this transition, which will require updates to national laws, particularly the Foreign Nationals and Integration Act (AIG).

### Background

The European Union has been planning to modernize the visa application process for short-term stays in the Schengen Area. On 13 November 2023, the EU adopted a regulation requiring that Schengen Visa applications be submitted electronically via a new EU platform. This regulation aims to replace traditional paper visa stickers with digital visas, with a view toward streamlining the process and enhancing efficiency.

### Key developments

On 13 November 2024, the Swiss Federal Council approved the transition to digital Schengen Visa applications. This requires amendments to national laws, particularly the Foreign Nationals and Integration Act (AIG). These legal updates will facilitate the integration of the new electronic platform and ensure compatibility with European standards.

The digitalization of visa applications aims to standardize processes, simplify procedures for applicants, and enhance cooperation among Schengen Member State immigration authorities. Several exceptions to the use of the EU platform are anticipated and these will be defined by The Federal Council.

Switzerland plans to implement the digital platform in January 2028 at the earliest.

### Impact on employers

The transition to digital visas will bring several changes for current and future Schengen Visa holders and the organizations that sponsor them. As paper visa stickers are replaced with digital visas, the process of obtaining and verifying visas will become more secure and streamlined. Digital visas will enhance security by minimizing the risk of fraud and forgery, with barcodes and electronic verification making it easier to authenticate visas. The standardization of visa application procedures across Schengen Member States will ensure a consistent experience for all applicants, regardless of their country of origin.

Future applicants will benefit from a simplified application process through the new electronic EU platform, reducing the need for physical paperwork and in-person visits to consulates or embassies. This will also reduce costs associated with obtaining Schengen Visas. There will be a transition period during which both paper and digital visas will be valid, allowing visa holders ample time to switch without disrupting their travel plans.

### Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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