

Guidelines for exceptional and simplified handling of visa applications for visa holders having postponed the intended trip to a future date

The constantly evolving travel restrictions due to initiatives to contain the spreading of Covid-19, means that many travellers chose to postpone their trip.

This means that persons who have been granted visas in view of travelling in the near future may not be able to use the visa they hold, either because it will have expired already at the time of the start of the postponed trip, or because the visa validity will not cover the entire duration of the postponed trip.

There are no provisions on the Visa Code covering the modification of visas under these circumstances and requests for ‘modification’ should be treated like a new visa application. The objective of these guidelines is to set up exceptional and simplified measures to apply temporarily and exclusively in cases linked to postponement of trips because of the Covid-19 decease.

These guidelines are not compulsory but harmonisation of practices at local level appears to be a sine qua non. These guidelines will be shared with LSC correspondents at EU Delegations.

It is expected that Member States will be confronted with high numbers of requests and, possibly also experience pressure from tourism and business communities to ensure smooth travelling once the situation is back to normal. Therefore, the exceptional measures should be as simple as possible without compromising security. Likewise, it is important that Member States inform the public as soon as possible and deploy the necessary resources to carry out these procedures as efficiently as possible.

‘Modifying’ the validity of an issued visa cannot be assimilated with the simple rebooking of a train or flight ticket. Therefore, Member States must carefully consider the following with regard to the handling of these cases and the following approach is recommended:

Information to the public: immediately inform the public in the concerned locations of the practice to be followed; Member States should in LSC draw up a common information to the public.

Scope: Persons who hold a valid visa that will expire by 30 June 2020 who can prove postponement of the intended trip; i.e. confirmed rebooked travel arrangements, postponement of meetings/conferences/events (public and private), i.e. a new starting date of the postponed trip for the period 15 March – 30 September 2020, and where the validity of the existing visa cannot cover the entire duration of the postponed trip.

Access: specific slots and counters should be offered to the persons concerned at the consulate/ESP

Requirements for lodging (applicants):

- submission of completed and signed application form indicating the newly planned (postponed) travel dates,

- one photo,
- the travel document with the previously issued visa,
- the proof of new travel arrangements, postponement of meetings/conferences/events, as applicable,
- travel medical insurance covering the new travel dates

Handling (Member States' consular authorities):

- create new application in VIS, link to previous application, copy biometrics and upload the photograph.
- launch compulsory checks (SIS, national databases and prior consultation, if relevant), but further assessments should normally not be necessary,
- issue a new visa covering the new (postponed) travel dates. **The existing visa should not be revoked (unless explicitly requested by the applicant*) or annulled, nor should the visa sticker be invalidated.**

**In such cases the procedure set out on Article 34 of the Visa Code and Annex 32 to the Visa Code Handbook must be applied (=compulsory)*

The new visa should, in general, be issued for the same number of entries, authorised duration of stay and length of validity as the previous visa.

If the existing visa will still be valid on the start date of the new trip, but does not cover the entire period of the new trip, the validity of the new visa should start on the day after the end of validity of the existing visa.

Processing time: the general rules apply (max 15 calendar days)

No stamps: stamps invented for the purpose are not allowed.
