

## GENERAL SCHENGEN INFORMATION

On 21st December 2007 Poland, together with 8 other new EU Member States, joined the Schengen area – a territory with no checks at internal borders formed by 24 States[1]. These States apply uniform rules concerning entry and short stays in their territories.

To enter the Schengen territory third-country nationals must be in possession of a valid travel document and a visa if it is required. They also have to meet the following conditions:

- they justify the purpose and conditions of the intended stay and prove that they have sufficient means of subsistence, both for the period of the intended stay and for the return to their country of origin or transit to a third State into which they are certain to be admitted, or are in a position to acquire such means lawfully
- no alert has been issued for them for the purposes of refusing entry
- they are not considered to be a threat to public policy, national security or the international relations of any of the Schengen States.

After undergoing the single check at the external border it is possible to move freely within the Schengen territory.

Schengen States issue the following types of uniform visas which entitle the holder to enter and stay in the Schengen territory:

- **airport transit visa (A)** – valid only for airport transit, does not entitle the holder to leave the transit zone of the airport
- **transit visa (B)** – valid for transit through the Schengen territory for a period not exceeding 5 days
- **short-stay visa (C)** – valid for stays of no more than 90 days per period of 180 days

Apart from uniform visas, Schengen States issue **national long-stay visas (D)** and residence permits which are valid only for the territory of the issuing State.

Long-stay national visas entitle their holders to one visa-free transit of maximum 5 days through the Schengen territory in order to reach the territory of the Schengen country which issued the visa, unless they fail to fulfil the entry conditions (see above) or they are on the national list of alerts of the Schengen country through the territory of which they seek to transit. Any next transit through the territories of Schengen States, irrespective of its destination, is possible only with a transit visa.

Holders of residence permits issued by one of the Schengen States are allowed to travel within the Schengen area during a maximum 3-month period.

### **Visas and residence permits issued by Poland after 21st December 2007**

On 21st December 2007 Poland started issuing uniform visas (A, B, C) valid for the entire Schengen territory. Poland continues issuing long-stay D visas and residence permits, valid only for Poland.

Holders of Polish D visas (issued before 21st December 2007 as well as after that date) will be entitled to one visa-free transit of maximum 5 days through the Schengen territory in order to reach the territory of Poland, unless they fail to fulfil the entry conditions (see above) or they are on the national list of alerts of the Schengen country through the territory of which they seek to transit. In order to travel back to the country of origin and generally in case of any next transit through the territories of Schengen States, holders of Polish D visa need a transit visa.

Holders of Polish residence permits are allowed to enter the Schengen territory and stay there for a period not exceeding 90 days.

Polish short-stay visas issued before 21st December 2007 have not been converted into Schengen visas automatically. They remain valid for the period indicated in the visa, but their holders are entitled to enter and stay only in Poland. Until 30th June 2008 such visas also entitle their holders to transit through Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Slovakia and Slovenia.

### **Entry conditions for third-country nationals under visa obligation**

Third-country nationals are allowed to enter and stay in Poland, if they are in a possession of one of the following titles:

- uniform short-stay Schengen visa (C)
- Polish long-stay national visa (D)
- C or D visa issued by Poland before 21st December 2007, provided it is still valid
- Polish residence permit
- residence permit issued by another Schengen State

The following titles are valid only for the purpose of transit:

- uniform airport transit Schengen visa (A) – only for airport transit
- uniform transit Schengen visa (B)
- A or B visa issued by Poland before 21st December 2007, provided it is still valid
- D visa issued by another Schengen State – once only, in order to reach the territory of the Schengen State which issued the D visa
- C visa issued before 21st December 2007 by one of the Member States that joined the EU in 2004, provided it is still valid (such visas entitle to transit through the territory of the above-mentioned Schengen countries until 30th June 2008)
- residence permit issued by Switzerland or Liechtenstein

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[1] 22 EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden + Norway and Iceland