



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
Directorate-General for Education and Culture  
Youth, Sport and Citizenship  
**Youth in Action**

## **GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VISA/RESIDENCE PERMIT APPLICATIONS FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE YOUTH IN ACTION PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS**

This note has been prepared for the benefit of youth organisations, youth workers and leaders and young people with the aim of providing them with help and advice on advance preparation before applying for visas in the case of short-term (*up to 3 months*) and long-term (*3 to 12 months*) mobility projects. For long-term projects, such as European Voluntary Service projects, a permit of residence has usually to be obtained.

It should be noted, however, that the following recommendations are NOT meant to provide accurate information on visa application procedures, as these may change from country to country. Therefore, information on visa application guidelines and procedures should be obtained from the relevant Embassies/Consulates.

In principle, Youth in Action programme beneficiaries from non-European Union (EU) countries coming into the EU, and young people from the EU going to non-EU countries to take part in various youth projects have to apply for a visa of entry into the relevant host country. Young people resident within an EU Member State, who are holders of a non-EU nationality/passport, might also need a visa to enter another EU Member State.

Depending on the length of stay, the procedures to obtain visas could in some cases take a long time and cause delays and difficulties if the relevant documents are not submitted at the time of application and ultimately could result in the rejection of the visa application.

It is therefore advisable to contact the Embassy/Consulate of the relevant country very early in the stage of planning a project and before undertaking any travel arrangements, to obtain the necessary visa application form and guidelines.

The European Commission would like to stress that responsibility for issuing, or refusing to issue, a visa of entry or a residence permit, remains within the jurisdiction of the relevant national governments.

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SHORT-TERM YOUTH PROJECT MOBILITY</b><br/><b>Applying for visas</b></p> |
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**1. Passports:**

1.1 The passport of each exchange participant should be valid for the duration of the trip. Some countries have an immigration requirement for a passport to remain valid for a minimum period, usually of at least six months, beyond the date of entry into the country.

1.2 In the case of young people aged below 18, photos on passports should be recent and not of a younger age.

**2. Visas (short-term stays):**

2.1 As highlighted above, it is advisable to check, at the planning stage and preferably before submitting a grant application, whether there are visa requirements. The relevant Youth in Action National Agency may help with advice on the basis of their experience on visa application procedures. Some National Agencies have also developed contacts or forms of cooperation with the competent Ministries in their country. For projects involving Neighbouring Partner Countries in South-East Europe, Eastern Europe and Caucasus and the Euro-Mediterranean region, the relevant regional SALTO Youth Resource Centre may also provide advice and assistance. Their contact details can be found at: <http://www.salto-youth.net>.

It is also advisable to contact, at an early stage, the Consulate or Embassy of the country to be visited. It would be helpful, at this initial stage, to outline:

- the nature, objectives and length of the youth project;
- the number of young people involved;
- nationality/citizenship of the participants travelling in the group as visa requirements may vary according to nationality.

2.2 If a visa of entry is obligatory, the relevant Consulate/Embassy will provide information on the necessary requirements and visa application forms and procedures.

2.3 Period of application: The completed visa application forms should be sent if possible by post, or preferably delivered by hand (as it is usually requested in a number of countries), to the relevant Consulate/Embassy. It is advisable that applications are submitted as soon as possible and at least **8 to 10 weeks** before the date of departure, to allow sufficient time for dealing with unforeseen delays and possible further requirements from the relevant Embassy/Consulate.

In cases where visa applications have to be submitted by hand, travel to/from the capital city, where the Embassy/Consulate is based, should also be taken into consideration. It is also possible that visa applicants might be asked to attend interview.

2.4 In a few cases, an Embassy or Consulate for the country to be visited might not be available in the applicant's country of residence. The Consulate of another country might act as the intermediary. Therefore information on how to proceed and where to apply has to be found at a very early stage of the project.

2.5 Visa application: The relevant visa application forms must be completed and signed by each applicant and should be submitted to the relevant authority together with:

- each participant's passport;
- the relevant visa fee;
- passport-size photos, if required;
- an official letter of invitation from the host partner organisation, providing full details of the project:
  - duration of the project (dates of the exchange activity)
  - total number of participants in the invited group
  - the invited participants' names, dates of birth, passport numbers/date of expiry
  - aims and objectives of the project and the theme of the activity
  - status, role and aims of the host organisation
  - confirmation that all local costs during the duration of the exchange (full board and lodging and programme activities) will be covered by the host organisation.

2.6 In addition, it would be helpful to obtain a letter of support from the relevant National Agency or Executive Agency, as early as possible, and **not** only if the visa application fails. To obtain a letter of support, it is essential to provide the following details:

- reference number of the project;
- full name and address of the applicant organisation;
- full name and address of the host partner organisation;
- aims and objectives of the project and the theme of the activity;
- duration of the project (dates of the exchange activity);
- all visa applicants' names, dates of birth, passport numbers/date of expiry;
- address and fax number of the relevant Consulate/Embassy to which the support letter should be addressed to.

It is also possible to contact the EU Delegations in Partner Countries which could provide advice and information. Relevant contact details are obtainable from: [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/delegations/web\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/delegations/web_en.htm) .

If, despite submission of above listed documents, the visa application fails, the applicant could try to appeal to the issuing authority. The relevant National Agency and the Executive Agency should be informed of the failure of the application. However, it might not be possible for the National Agency or the Executive Agency to provide any further support, even if they try their best.

2.7 Depending on the country visited, proof of travel booking, as well as the availability of a travel insurance policy could also be requested. In such a case a copy of the policy should be attached to the visa application form. It is therefore important to take out an insurance policy as soon as the travel booking details are confirmed.

2.8 In the case of youth exchanges, the issue of a 'group visa' is sometimes possible. However, this is not advisable as in cases of emergencies, such as unexpected repatriation of one of the group participant due to illness or other incidents; the whole group could be affected.

2.9 Procedures for entry could be less demanding in some countries, when a visa could be obtained by paying a visa fee at the border of entry (e.g. airport). It would be helpful to find out the exact amount and currency of the relevant fee to ensure that sufficient funds are available on entry into the visited country. It would be however advisable, where possible, to purchase such visas of entry from the relevant Consulate/Embassy prior to leaving the country of residence.

#### **Tips for group leaders**

- Check the passports expiry dates;
- Make a note of all passport numbers, date and place of issue, and keep separately in a safe place, as well as leaving a copy with colleagues/friends;
- Keep a copy of the visa stamped on each passport;
- Keep a record of details of contact persons (parent; friend; etc) at home;
- Keep passports safe during the whole duration of the project visit;
- Keep a record of the address and telephone number of your own Consulate/Embassy nearest to the venue of the project;
- In the case of a passport being stolen or lost, immediately contact your nearest Consulate/Embassy in the country visited for advice (always have the relevant address/telephone number with you).

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>VOLUNTEER MOBILITY</b><br/><b>Applying for visa and residence permits</b></p> |
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**Above mentioned recommendations apply. This part aims at giving additional information specifically for volunteers and long term projects:**

1. Regulations for entry into the countries of the host organisations and the issue of residence permits, for European Voluntary Service (EVS) volunteers, vary from country to country. It is therefore advisable that the relevant Embassy/Consulate based within the volunteer's country of residence is contacted for details of procedures and requirements for entry and residence in the country of the host organisation very early in the project planning stage and **as early as possible** prior to any firm confirmation of the volunteer's placement in the host project. When applying for information, it is helpful to outline:

- the aims and objectives of the Youth in Action programme's EVS Action;
- the nature of the host project and the proposed volunteer's tasks;
- nationality/citizenship of the volunteer(s).

2. Period of application: Visa applications should be submitted at least **8 to 10 weeks** prior to the agreed date of entry into the country of the host project.

3. Residence permit: Volunteers with a non-EU nationality and those from a non-EU Member State coming into an EU Member State, or a candidate country, are advised to contact the Embassy/Consulate of the relevant host country within their country of residence.

4. In countries where the status of volunteer does not exist, a work permit might be required for EVS volunteers. Therefore it is essential and most important that, before applying to the relevant Embassy/Consulate in their country of residence, volunteers seek the advice and assistance of their sending and hosting organisations as well as of the relevant Youth in Action National Agency.

5. Application process: When applying for a visa/residence permit, in addition to the official forms requested by the relevant Embassy/Consulate, the following support documents could facilitate the issue of a visa/residence permit:

- An official letter from the sending/coordinating organisation, providing:
  - the aims and objectives of the project;
  - information on the status, role and activities of the sending/coordinating organisation;
  - the volunteer's name, date of birth, home address, passport number/expiry date;
  - proof that the project is organised within the framework of the Youth in Action Programme with the approval of, and financial support from, the European Commission;
  - signed preliminary project agreement between the organisation and the volunteer.
- An official letter of invitation from the host organisation providing details of:
  - status, role and activities of host organisation;
  - nature of the host project and relevant tasks to be undertaken by each volunteer;
  - the volunteer's name, date of birth, home address and their passport number/date of expiry;

- proof that the project is organised within the framework of the Youth in Action Programme with the approval of, and financial support from, the European Commission;
  - signed preliminary project agreement between the organisation and the volunteer.
- A letter of support can also be issued by the National Agency or the Executive Agency to confirm the approval of the project and outline the aims and objectives of the Youth in Action programme. In such a case the following details must be provided to the National Agency/Executive Agency by the sending or hosting organisation:
- reference number of the project;
  - full name and address of the sending/coordinating organisation;
  - full name and address of the host organisation;
  - voluntary activity dates;
  - the volunteer's name, date of birth, home address, passport number/date of expiry;
  - in cases of a multilateral project, details of volunteers per host project;
  - address and fax number of the relevant Consulate/Embassy to which the European Commission's support letter should be addressed to.

6. In non-EU countries where there are no National Agencies, it is also possible to contact the EU local Delegation in the country, which could provide advice and information.

7. For projects involving Neighbouring Partner Countries in South-East Europe, Eastern Europe and Caucasus and the Euro-Mediterranean region, the relevant regional SALTO Youth Resource Centre may also provide advice and assistance. Their contact details can be found at: <http://www.salto-youth.net/>.

8. Further information and advice on volunteering and the legal status of volunteers in various countries are available through the following websites:

[www.avso.org](http://www.avso.org)

[www.cev.be](http://www.cev.be)

## Useful references

- Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 10 July 2001 on mobility within the Community of students, persons undergoing training, volunteers and teachers and trainers - 2001/613/EC (OJ L215/30 of 9.8.2001).  
This recommendation calls on Member States to alleviate the administrative obstacles to volunteer mobility. The text of this directive can be found at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2001:215:0030:0037:EN:PDF>
- EU directive 2004/114/EC of 13 December 2004 on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service (OJ L375/12 of 23.12.2004).  
This directive formulates admission conditions and procedures for different target groups. However, the scope of the directive is compulsory only for students, which means that Member States can decide whether to apply it or not to other target groups. The text of this directive can be found at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2004:375:0012:0018:EN:PDF>
- Council Recommendation of 20 November 2008 on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union (OJ C319/8 of 13.12.2008).  
This recommendation encourages Member States to promote the mobility of young volunteers across Europe. The text of this directive can be found at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:319:0008:0010:EN:PDF>

## Contact details

- EU Delegations: [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/delegations/web\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/delegations/web_en.htm)
- Youth in Action National Agencies : [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth/doc152\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth/doc152_en.htm)
- SALTO Youth Resource Centers: <http://www.salto-youth.net>