

ANNEX II MAPPING OF VISA PRACTICES

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1. MAPPING OF VISA PROCESS

This section presents a mapping of the visa processes as they are described by the issuing authorities themselves. The visa process was mapped for each origin market to provide information on key areas on the implementation of visa code as it is made public on the consulates' websites. The most important procedural aspects include:

- Use of External Service Providers
- Online and/or meeting requests
- Regionalised presence
- Timelines stated in information
- Accessible information (including online)
- Rules for procedure
- Translations of forms and other documents

The purpose of the mapping was to identify relevant aspects of the visa application to be used in the consulate questionnaire. Additionally, it also exposes to what extent information is available for applicants on Schengen Consulates' websites. This is important as it may affect the ease with which applicants can complete their applications.

The mapping was completed through two main sources of data. Firstly, desk research focused on all available data online for the selected consulates which was identified in section 2.2. Analysis of quantitative information. Secondly, any information gaps were followed up by the results gathered in the survey and interviews with consulates, which also served as a validation strengthening the results or as some measure of uncertainty in cases of direct divergence.

Mapping the processes involved when issuing visa was done with attention towards the heterogeneous implementation of the visa code from Schengen consulate to Schengen consulate. In practice this meant that whilst the mapping proposed which visa procedure is the most common, it also pointed to diverting trends and exceptions to the rule. Meanwhile, it took into account that the practices may also vary depending on which country the consulate is based in. This approach was mainstreamed throughout all sections in this chapter. It is important to note that the

It is important to keep in mind that the focus is not (and cannot be) on Schengen visa procedures globally, but specifically the procedure as it is executed in these important markets of origin.

1.1 The Review Scheme

The review scheme is focused around 24 questions and an option to make remarks. The scheme itself was developed, piloted and adjusted to ensure that it accurately reflected the application visa processes and consisted of mutually exclusive questions. To ensure consistency in the coding only three coders were involved and close contact as well as frequent consultation was a priority.

Table 1 below contains all the review questions which on a more practical level were implemented in an excel sheet to ensure easy access to the data. Due to considerations of layout the questions and answers will not necessarily always be listed in their original length in tables and charts.

Table 1 Review questions

1. Member State or Associate Country
2. Third-country
3. Please paste link to consular website if any
4. Does the consulate outsource services to any External Service Provider?
5. If any which services?
6. Please note the name of the ESP providing the consulate in question with visa related services
7. Can the applicant lodge a visa application online?
8. Is the applicant required to appear in person at the consulate?
9. Number of C visa applications in 2011
10. Does the consulate require a travel program?
11. Does the consulate state the 15 working days C visa decision deadline?
12. Does the consulate state the 2 week deadline for being granted an visa appointment
13. Does the consulate require proof of a medical insurance?
14. Does the consulate require that the applicant submits an invitation?
15. Does the consulate require any statement from the applicant's employer?
16. Is the Schengen visa application form available for download on the website?
17. Is the Schengen visa application form available in an official language
18. Does the consulate website clearly state documentary requirements
19. Does the consulate require proof of a flight reservation
20. Does the consulate require proof of a hotel reservation
21. Does the consulate require proof of regular income or available funds?
22. Does the consulate require proof of dependence?
23. To which extent is information available online?
24. Time to complete review (<i>to reflect ease of finding information</i>)
25. Remarks

This review scheme was then applied to a sample of Schengen consulates, embassies and other diplomatic representations (from now on in general referred to as 'consulates') by reviewing their websites. This approach cannot verify whether the procedure identified is the one consulates use in practice i.e. consulates could be demanding fewer or other documents. However, the consular websites and downloadable material is the way in which many applicants are going to begin their investigation of travelling to Schengen and begin the application process. The interviews and surveys with consulates, travel agents and potential travellers will contribute a fuller picture and validate or refute the findings presented here.

Finally, while the review scheme allows us to draw out some general tendencies amongst the consulates reviewed, these will be supplemented by examples, exceptions and new initiatives to give more comprehensive picture.

1.2 The sample

MAPPING OF VISA PRACTICES

C Visas Applied For	Consulate	Top destination	C Visas Applied For	Consulate	Top destination	C Visas Applied For	Consulate	Top destination	C Visas Applied For	Consulate	Top destination	C Visas Applied For	Consulate	Top destination	C Visas Applied For	Consulate	Top destination
168,452	Lvov	PL	22,871	Johannes-burg	FR	61,009	Jeddah	FR	936,620	St. Petersburg	FI	54,293	Mumbai	CH	124,730	Beijing	IT
105,121	Kiev	DE	21,710	Pretoria	DE	24,810	Riyadh	IT	729,066	Moscow	ES	42,410	Mumbai	BE	91,054	Beijing	FR
74,822	Lutsk	PL	17,805	Johannes-burg	IT	23,371	Riyadh	DE	560,768	Moscow	IT	39,930	Mumbai	DE	89,400	Beijing	DE
60,820	Kiev	PL	10,785	Pretoria	NL	21,173	Riyadh	FR	457,699	Moscow	EL	36,657	New Delhi	IT	84,965	Shanghai	FR
56,561	Kiev	ES	10,725	Pretoria	ES	13,002	Riyadh	ES	297,973	Moscow	FR	36,656	Mumbai	IT	84,555	Shanghai	DE
48,961	Kiev	CZ	10,594	Cape Town	IT	8,765	Riyadh	CH	283,556	Moscow	CZ	25,396	New Delhi	DE	74,778	Shanghai	IT
48,812	Kiev	HU	10,177	Cape Town	DE	7,853	Riyadh	CZ	246,378	Moscow	DE	24,701	New Delhi	FR	40,490	Guangzhou	FR
48,801	Kiev	EL	9,146	Cape Town	FR	7,220	Riyadh	AT	134,638	Moscow	FI	23,199	Chennai	DE	38,896	Guangzhou	IT
46,954	Uzhho-rod	HU	8,330	Pretoria	CH	6,370	Jeddah	IT	120,575	Moscow	AT	20,690	New Delhi	CH	35,295	Guangzhou	DE
43,885	Kiev	IT	6,260	Cape Town	ES	4,569	Riyadh	NL	112,117	Kaliningrad	PL	19377	Mumbai	NL	34,777	Beijing	CH

Consulates from Schengen Country top 10 unrepresented in the above:

ES	Beijing	23,200	ES	Mumbai	16,735	AT	Moscow	120,575	SE	Riyadh	2,836	AT	Pretoria	5,960	FR	Kiev	42,586
SE	Beijing	19,863	SE	New Delhi	12,871	LT	Kaliningrad	61,028	EL	Riyadh	2,351	EL	Johannesburg	4,375	AT	Kiev	29,471
NL	Beijing	19,737	AT	New Delhi	12,494							PT	Johannesburg	3,993	SK	Kiev	21,462
NO	Beijing	18,085	DK	New Delhi	8,136							BE	Johannesburg	3,596			
AT	Beijing	17,242															
DK	Beijing	8,239															

Total sample		Total sample		Total sample		Total sample		Total sample		Total sample		Total sample	
805,279		373,544		4,061,002		183,329		146,327		796,708			
Total market		Total market		Total market		Total market		Total market		Total market		Total market	
1,079,516		499,954		5,265,866		196,327		184,618		1,142,732			
Coverage	74.5 pct.		74.7pct.		77.1 pct.		93.3pct.		79.2 pct.		69.7 pct.		

This strategy has been devised to target the consulates which cover the highest volume of applications and through this map the visa procedure which a majority of the applicants face. The average consulate in the sample received 69,735 applications in 2011, whilst one consulate included received the lowest amount of applications at 4,569 and at the other end of the scale the consulate receiving the most had 936,620 applications.

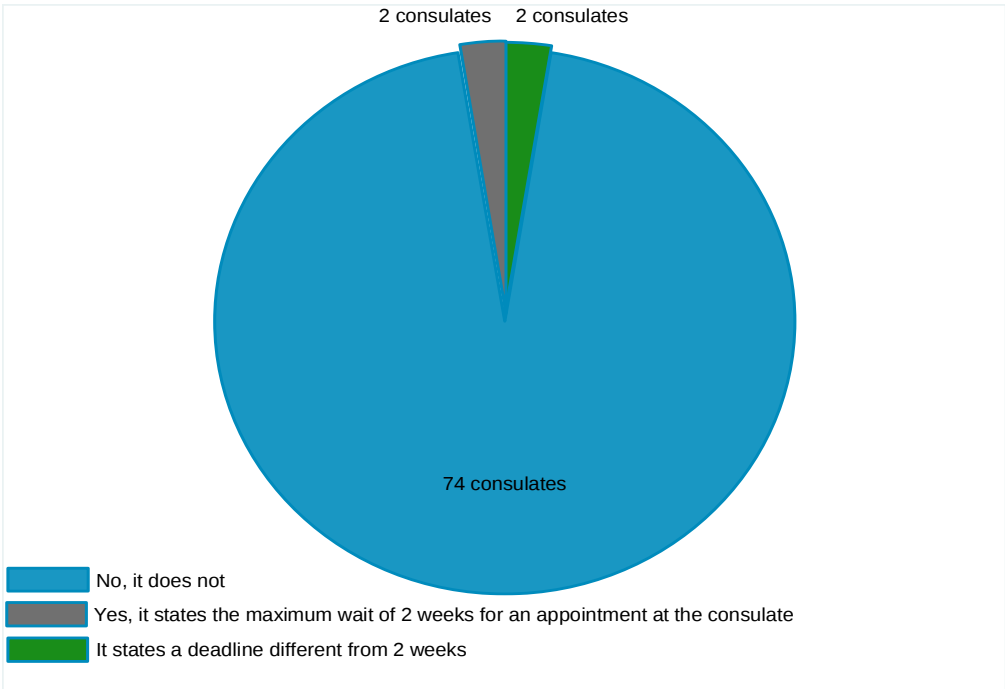
Table 2: Total Coverage (based on 2011)

Horizontal Coverage: on average 78 pct. of all applications for Schengen c visas in the 6 countries.	Vertical Coverage: 19 Schengen countries are represented in the sample.	Density: The top one city in the third-country represents on average 53 pct. of the respective national applications to Schengen (min. 43.9 pct. and max. 65.6 pct.)	Global coverage: The 6 countries together represent 64.28 pct. of Schengen visa applications world wide
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1.3 Applying for an Appointment

The review scheme systematized information on the 2 week deadline for applicants to be granted an appointment to lodge their visa application as stated in the Visa Code. This was done by examining if applicants are made aware of this 2 week deadline to be granted an appointment on the consulate websites

Figure 1: two-week appointment deadline



As the figure above shows, most of the consular websites do not actively inform potential applicants of the 2 week deadline.

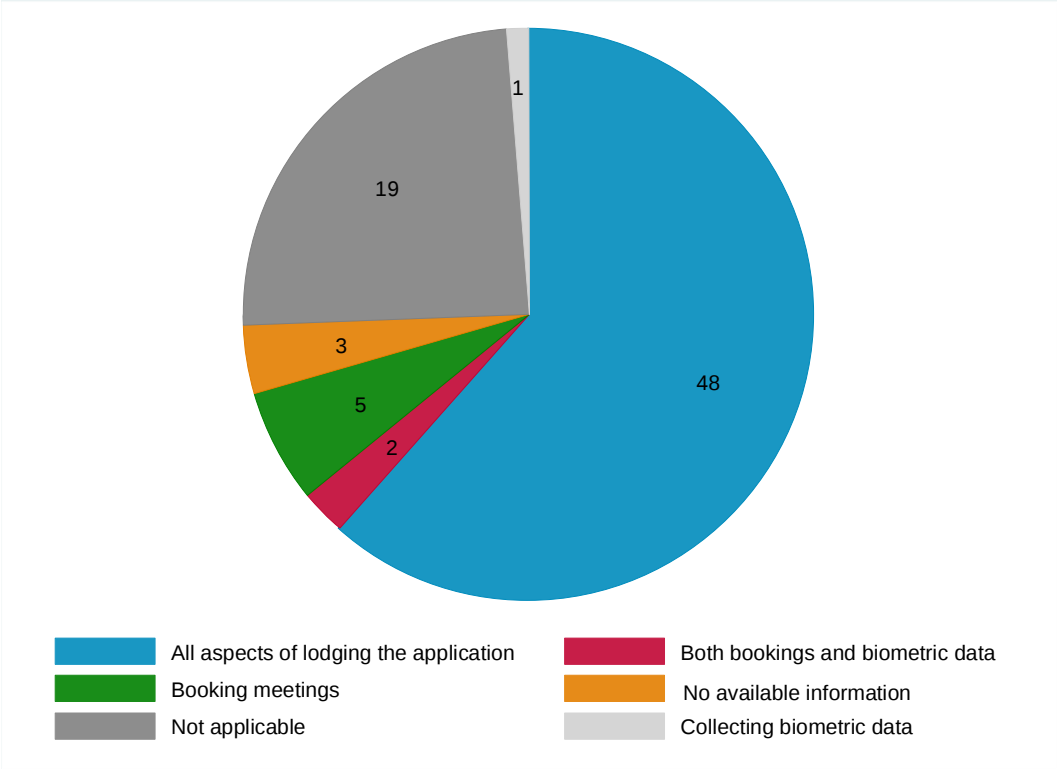
1.4 Use of External Service Providers

According to the consular websites 60 out of the 81 consulates outsources at least some services to an ESP, data is unavailable for 3 and 18 of them do not outsource any services.

VFS.Global was the ESP most used by the reviewed consulates were dominated by one provider , which is, which represents more than 50 pct. of the ESPs listed if the two consulates were ESPs collaborate are included¹. Other firms worth mentioning are Etimad (services 2 consulates in Saudi Arabia), Capago (services 3 consulates in South Africa) TLScontact, which is present in the Chinese market where they supply 7 of the reviewed consulates with services.

An example of a different type of ESP is the Portuguese 'Portal das Comunidades Portuguesas' in Johannesburg, which is a portal operated by the Portuguese Federal Ministry of the Exterior (M.N.E.), that deals with administrative tasks only and then transfers the folders to the respective consular post, who are responsible for making a decision.

Figure 2: Outsources Services



The chart above shows the absolute numbers for which services consulates outsources.

1.5 The Schengen Application form

The visa application form is a basic requirement of the visa procedure for all Schengen states. All the reviewed consulates have the application form available in a PDF or word-format on their website with the exception of the Belgian consulate in Johannesburg where an application form could not be found on the website. Concerning the availability of the application form in a local/official (local can differs within countries) language, 22 pct. of the consulates have no application form available online. This is in particular the case for the consulates in Saudi Arabia where more than half of them do not have application forms available online in the official language. This information cannot rule out that applications would be available in an official language on the consulates i.e. in paper copies.

My Europe Visa Capago which is the ESP for both France and Italy in South Africa allows the Schengen application to be filled in online and then retrieved by the consulates when the applicant comes in to submit the printed and signed application (including supporting documents) or later on in the process. The Portuguese consulate in Johannesburg also offers application

¹ VFS. Global collaborates with another ESP called INTERSTAMP.

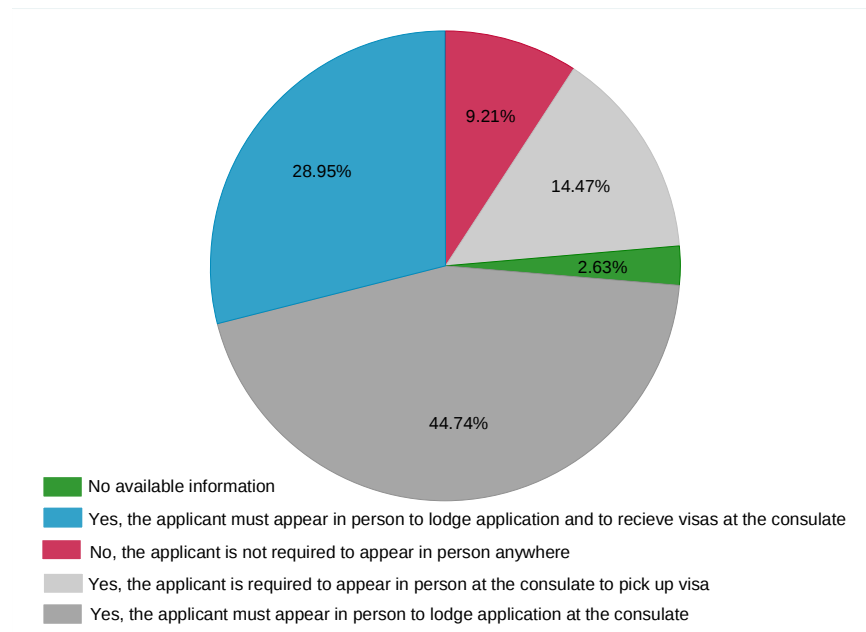
forms to be filled in online on the Portal das Comunidades Portuguesas and the practice is as such not exclusive to Capago

1.6 Submitting the application

The review shows that none of the consulates in the sample state on their website that applicants can lodge an application online. Except for four consulates for which there is a lack of information on the website regarding whether you can apply online or not, 95 pct. of all the consulates make it clear that applicants have to lodge their application either in person or by representative.

To examine whether there is potential in facilitating online application, we therefore attempted to map the extent to which the applicant is required to appear in person as this might be a key explanation behind the lack of such an initiative. This variable was difficult to examine, since some consulates are vague when it comes to describing the practical aspects of the process, potential for using couriers and at times discriminatory in who needs to appear in person. In cases of the latter, the box was ticked at whichever category which represented the experience of the average applicant. Some examples of which type of applicant might be exempted are presented below.

Figure 3: Requirement to appear in person.



The chart above shows the requirements as stated on the websites and at the ESP's. These refer to when an applicant must appear in person, either exclusively at the lodging of the application, at the pick-up of the passport, at both or not at all.

At 73 pct. of the consulates the applicant has to appear in person to *submit the visa application* after he/she has requested and been granted an appointment to do so. An example of an exception is the Dutch embassy in Beijing which waives the requirement to lodge the application in person (and has no requirement to pick up the passport in person) when an applicant has made two or more trips to the Schengen Area in the past two years. A similar exemption is offered by the Austrian consulate in Pretoria if the applicant has received two visas in the past three years. In general the sample shows no tendency towards certain Schengen states having a consistent approach in informing about these requirements online, neither internally as in a national coordination nor externally as a homogenous approach within third-countries.

The Hungarian consulate in Kiev is a helpful example of a more comprehensive exception than the aforementioned as it on its website states that it accepts applications submitted by travel agencies², whilst the consulate reserves the right to call any applicant to the embassy for an

² Seemingly without any further specification.

interview. Similar practices are in place elsewhere in a more confined form such as the Italian Embassy in Jeddah allows for visas to be submitted either in person or through a representative³. It is not clear how this works with regard to the implementation of the VIS. The French Embassy in New Delhi facilitates the visa process by allowing the submission of visa application and collection of passports to be done not exclusively by the applicant but also by travel agents authorized by the Embassy. It is not clear how widespread the practice of letting travel agencies lodge applications is.

Figure 4: example - facilitation for frequent travellers

Facilitation for frequent travellers

Certain consulates have advertised facilitation measures for frequent travellers on their websites. These often follow the same recipe. If an applicant has had one or more visas issued by a Schengen/or country specific consulate within a given period of time then the applicant **does not have to appear in person to lodge the application** as they normally would have to. Unlike the business facilitation measures previously mentioned this is a possibility open to all types of applicants regardless of their purpose of entry. **For example**, The Dutch Embassy in Pretoria has a bona fide facilitation in place for applicants who have had a Schengen visa in the preceding three years, meaning that the applicant can send the application through a third party (courier, travel agency etc.). The Embassy reserves the right to request the applicant to appear in person.

Finally, it could be argued that the signature requirement on the visa form, which asks applicants to acknowledge awareness of data protection rules, is what stalls the development of facilitation procedures. This could be a consequence either of challenges of a technical nature which inhibit facilitation or that it is not possible to offer facilitation measures as consulates can exclusively accept original signatures.

1.7 Documents to provide with application

Two points should be made from the outset. Firstly, it is a possibility that the consulates require more of fewer documents than those stated on the website. Secondly, it is often unclear what the exact nature of required documents is i.e. must they be originals, copies or can this be differentiated by allowing scans with the first submission and then originals later.

Figure 5: fact box - local Schengen cooperation

Local Schengen cooperation

The provisions on Local Schengen Cooperation (LSC) aim to ensure the harmonization of the operational application of the provisions of the Visa Code in light of the differences in local circumstances in third countries. A 2012 report on the functioning of the LSC, however, highlighted that the framework is not used optimally and offered recommendations on how to explore its full potential¹. As the LSC are adapted to local context they differ depending on third-country.

Schengen representations who issue visas abroad require these core documents (as set by the Visa Code):

- Proof/certificate of legal residence
- Original passport, travel passport or equivalent
- 2 new passport sized photographs
- A visa application form

³ http://www.aletimad.com/italy_document.html

- Documenting Medical Insurance

On top of this a number of documents can be required and these can be divided into 6 categories:

- Previous visas (issued by the United Kingdom, Schengen, and the USA etc.)
- Documenting the ability to financial coverage of the expenses/ certification of subsistence
- Documenting purpose of entry
- Documenting main destination goal
- Documenting the intent to return to home country
- If the traveller is an unemployed spouse or a minor evidence documenting dependence on another traveller (or a spouse covering costs).

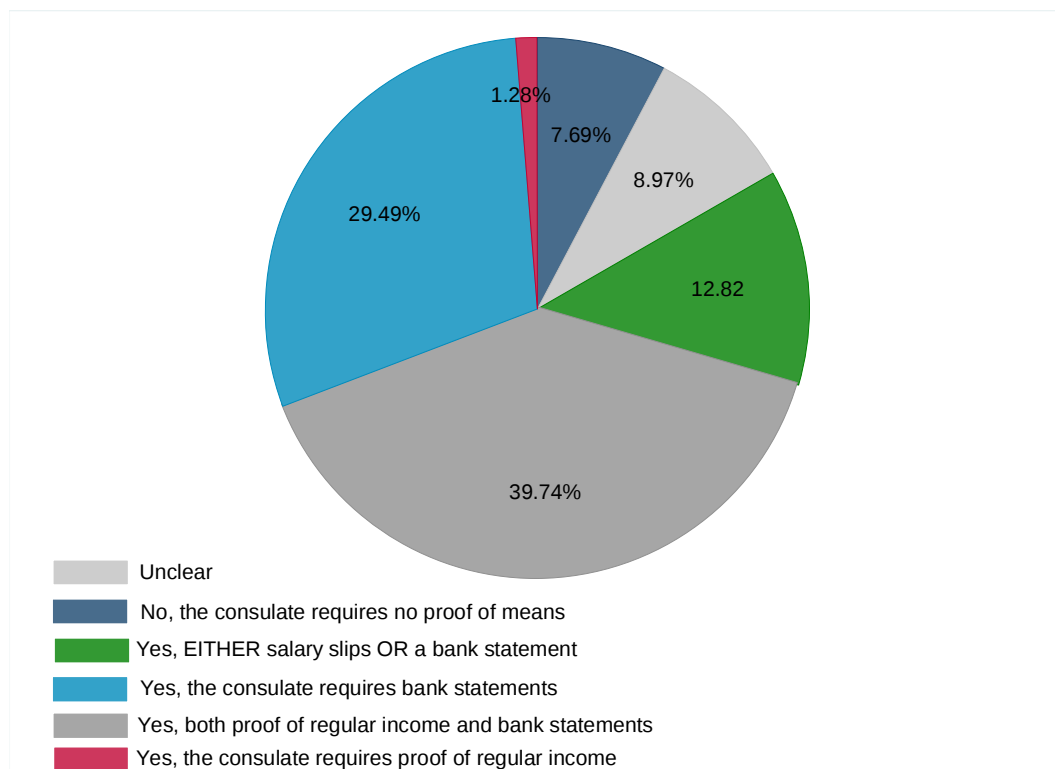
To provide a measure of whether it is clear or not which supporting documents applicants need in their application three questions were included in the review scheme to reflect the certainty with which the coders filled in the review. These were '*To which extent is information available online?*', '*Time to complete review (minutes)*' and '*Does the consulate website clearly state documentary requirements?*'.

Overall, 59 consulates have sufficient information available on their website, whilst two consulates have no available information whatsoever and 16 consulates had either some or limited information available.

1.7.1 Documenting the ability to financial coverage of the expenses/ certification of subsistence

The proof of means category must be clearly delimited from the documents which try to shed light on the risks of overstaying or conversely seek to prove the applicant's intent to return to the home country. Therefore statements from employers make up a separate question, because this often have the purpose of signifying that the applicant has a job to return home to, whilst also suggesting that the applicant has an income – a fact also covered by bank statements and proof of regular income which demonstrate that the applicant will be able to cover the expenses incurred during his/her stay within the Schengen Area.

Figure 6: Proof of regular means



At the Dutch Embassy in New Delhi the documentary requirement for bank statement/salary slips and hotel booking are waived if a Schengen referee can write a letter with proof of funds. Some embassies clearly state the specific reference amounts of euros the applicants are required to have per person per day.

The Example:

Like a majority of consulates, the Czech Republic in Moscow requests that the applicant supplies either a document proving a source of regular income or a recent bank statement.

The Best Practice:

An example of transparency is the Spanish Embassy in Kiev and consulate in Cape Town which both specify on the application form the minimum amount of funds required from applicants, which is 62.40 per day per person.

The Exception:

The Belgian consulate in Mumbai⁴ and The Swiss Embassy in Riyadh⁵ accept credit cards or travellers checks as sufficient proof of sustenance.

The Italian consulate in Cape Town has both reference amounts for a person travelling alone and then an adjusting costing for two people travelling together⁶, whilst the Italian Embassy in Moscow has a costing list dependent on total number of days and people⁷. The German consulate in Cape Town asks applicants to prove a minimum of EUR 40 per person per day for the duration of their trip. This being said, although the reference amounts may not be available on all consular websites, they are established by Member States and published on DG Home Affairs' website⁸.

In China almost all consulates require both proof of regular income and bank account statements, which represents half the occurrences of such a comprehensive documentation of means (requiring both types of documentation). The second most common type of requirement is bank statements, a category which the majority of consulates in Saudi Arabia belong to. This is one of the options under the harmonised lists. Besides these two examples most Schengen states have different requirements at different consulates in South Africa, India, Ukraine and Russia.

One remarkable difference is what is accepted as proof of funds, for example the Swiss Consulate in Mumbai clearly states that fixed deposits, credit cards, property documents and demat accounts⁹ are not considered as sufficient documentation of financial means¹⁰, whilst the Swiss Embassy in Riyadh (along with several others) accept credit cards as proof of funds. This could be related to the general level of wealth in Saudi Arabia.¹¹

According to the review, Saudi Arabian applicants face more flexible requirements when it comes to proving financial means. This is even the case when looking at the LSC harmonized document list for which the specific version for Saudi Arabia is leaner than others.

1.7.2 Documenting the purpose of entry

⁴ http://www.vfs-be-in.com/processing_times.aspx

⁵ http://www.eda.admin.ch/etc/medialib/downloads/edactr/sau.Par.0011.File.tmp/KSA%20LSC%20Harmonisd%20List%20KSA_en.pdf

⁶ http://www.myeuropevisa.com/IT-ZA/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=321%3Aminimum-financial&catid=54&Itemid=177&lang=en

⁷ <http://www.italyvmr.ru/en/content/35.htm>

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/docs/reference_amounts_table_en.pdf#zoom=100

⁹ Demat accounts are accounts which hold shares electronically and from which a statement can be drawn to give evidence of the possession of shares or securities.

¹⁰ <http://www.eda.admin.ch/etc/medialib/downloads/edactr/ind/cgmum.Par.0031.File.tmp/Requirements%20for%20a%20Tourist%2012092012.pdf>

¹¹ http://www.eda.admin.ch/etc/medialib/downloads/edactr/sau.Par.0011.File.tmp/KSA%20LSC%20Harmonised%20List%20KSA_en.pdf

A certain portion of the documents required of visa applicants is about documenting the purpose of entry, which for the short-stay visas differs between several such as tourism, business, medical treatment and studies. Although the majority of all required documents remain the same for the C visa, the ones documenting the purpose do not.

This type of documentation is necessary because the applicant has to provide evidence that he/she indeed does fall under the category of visa applied for. Some 40 pct. of consulates require applicants to submit a travel programme or itinerary, which describes in detail where and when the potential tourist will be in the Schengen Area and often what he/she plans on doing whilst there. More importantly, it can also serve the purpose of determining main destinations. In slightly more than 50 pct. of the cases the consulates do not require any travel programme or the like and in the remaining cases it is not clear whether it is a requirement or not.

A qualitative estimate of the most common approach to obtaining proof of the purpose of entry amongst Schengen states are invitations from either friends, relatives, companies or healthcare facilities. If the purpose is university studies the diplomatic representation requests a certificate of acceptance and receipts form fees. These types of documents can often replace hotel bookings and travel itineraries.

One interesting aspect of documenting the purpose of entry is to look at how embassies propose to accept an invitation au lieu de a hotel booking. These invitations are generally certified meaning that they are an official form certified by a Member State authority. **51 pct. of all consulates make it clear on their website that they either need a hotel booking or an invitation from someone in Schengen.** From this initial investigation, the approaches to letters of invitation differ greatly in terms of substance and form.

Figure 7: example - facilitation through flexibility¹²

Facilitation through flexibility

1. The Belgian Embassy in Mumbai has a form available for Belgians to fill in to act as a guarantor for an Indian visa applicant¹. The Finnish embassy in Moscow requests that if the applicant is going to travel with a friend or a relative who already has got a visa, the friend's visa number should be indicated or a copy of the visa attached. In addition to the more standard requirements the embassy requests invitations and documentation relating to an array of activities such as fetching a car in which case an invitation from a car dealer is requested.
2. The Italian Embassies in Kiev and Mumbai proposes several alternative documents to two of the documentary requirements facilitating the procedure for the applicant and the Italian consulate in Cape Town lists four options for documents which could serve as proof of accommodation.

Business travellers are mostly required to submit the same documents as tourist travellers, but must also include an original invitation from the company in the Schengen state they are travelling to. At the time of writing business travellers are the segments of travellers who benefit the most from new facilitation initiatives. The box below summarises three of these.

¹² Sources: <http://www.diplomatie.be/mumbai/media/mumbai/bijlage3fr.pdf>;
<http://www.italyvms.com.ua/ua/content/30.htm>; <http://www.vfs-italy.co.in/PDF/Tourist%20visa%20checklist.pdf>

Figure 8: example - business best practices

Business Best Practices

1. If the purpose of a trip is business, a so-called **walk-in-procedure** spares the applicant for applying for an appointment to lodge the application at the Dutch Embassy in Riyadh, who instead can walk in to the Embassy and submit the application directly. A similar procedure is in place at the Dutch Embassy in New Delhi and consulate in Mumbai, but exclusively for employees of companies which are registered with the representations.
2. The Dutch consulate in Cape Town advertises **MEVs with 1-5 year duration** for business people who need to travel to companies in the Netherlands frequently and who have already had three Schengen visas.
3. The Italian Embassy in Riyadh and the Italian consulate in Jeddah have introduced a new facilitation for Saudi businessmen and investors to facilitated trade and investment between the two countries. Specifically, applicants who have a "*declaration of invitation*" from a firm operating in Italy are exempted from certain submitting documents including proof of the objectives of the journey and "*the condition of economic-commercial operator*". The requirements to the nature of these documents are described in detail on the website.

1.7.3 Documenting the main destination goal

The main purpose of documents such as **flight reservations, hotel bookings and travel itineraries** is that they confirm the main goal of destination and thus prevent visa shopping.

Schengen states most often require flight reservations or bookings. It is not always clear what the financial implication of a *flight reservation* as opposed to a flight ticket. The flight reservation serves the purpose of documenting that the visa issuing consulate corresponds to that which the applicant is scheduled to arrive in first. Applicants are mostly required to submit a *copy* of their booking.

Table 3: Does the consulate require proof of a flight reservation?

	Third-country						Total
	China	India	Saudi Arabia	South Africa	Russia	The Ukraine	
No	0	0	1	0	3	5	9
The consulate reserves the right	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Unclear	0	2	1	1	1	2	7
Yes	15	12	9	13	6	5	60
Total	16	15	12	14	10	12	78

The table above summarises the practice of consulates requesting proof of a flight reservation. **As illustrated 76.9 pct. of all the reviewed representations demand proof of flight tickets**, whilst only 11.5 pct. request no documentation. Of the representations which do not demand documentation for flight tickets only one is located outside either Russia or Ukraine and that is the German Embassy in Riyadh.

Hotel bookings, business invitations, private invitations or letters from Educational institutes also confirm the main destination, while they can also document the purpose of travel.

The Example:

The Polish Consulate in Lutsk, Ukraine, they require that the applicant either gives evidence by submitting a voucher or a

	letter from a Polish travel agency confirming the 30 pct. paid hotel reservation if the trip has been organized by accredited travel agency or a partly (or fully) paid hotel booking.
The Best Practice (in terms of facilitation):	51 pct. of the sample accept invitations instead of hotel bookings to facilitate different purposes of travel
The Exception(s):	The French consulate in New Delhi specifies that the documentation for the hotel must be prepaid.

Another time of documentation is hotel vouchers which some consulates accept and others do not¹³.

1.7.4 Documenting the intent to return to home country

Proof of employment plays an important role in confirming that the applicant is unlikely to overstay his/her visa as it helps estimate the risks of the applicant violating the terms of the short-stay visa. Therefore most consulates require a statement from an employer as evidence that the applicant is rooted in his/her country of origin. This does however depends very much on from the characteristics of the third-country in question, which may be used to assess the risk of illegal immigration. Consulates require the statement from the employer to be stamped and signed and define it as original by these standards. The exact nature of the documents may differ, but is not always clearly stated on the website. Therefore this will be further examined in the surveys and interviews.

Table 4: Does the consulate require any statement from the applicant's employer?

	Third-country						Total
	China	India	Saudi Arabia	South Africa	Russia	The Ukraine	
No	0	2	5	2	5	6	20
The consulate reserves the right	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Unclear	0	1	1	1	1	1	6
Yes	16	9	6	11	4	5	51
Total	16	14	12	14	10	12	79

65 pct. of consulates require a statement from the applicant's employer which, often, must specify the length of the contract he/she has with the company. Whilst 25 pct. of consulates require no such statement, two German representations one in New Delhi and one Mumbai have a system where they reserve the right to ask an applicant for an employer statement, but it is not a default requirement.

Besides the flight reservations documenting the main destination goal of an applicant, they also serve the purpose of providing insight into the probability of an applicant to overstay the visa conditions.

The Example:	The Italian Embassy in Kiev demands "both sides" ticket reservation with fixed dates like most consulates for travelling by plane, bus or train reservation. In case of travelling by car the following documents are necessary. • The original and a copy of the vehicle registration certificate • The original and a copy the 'green card' insurance
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¹³ http://southafrica.nlembassy.org/appendices/products_and_services/consular_services/visa/visa-requirements-feb2012.html

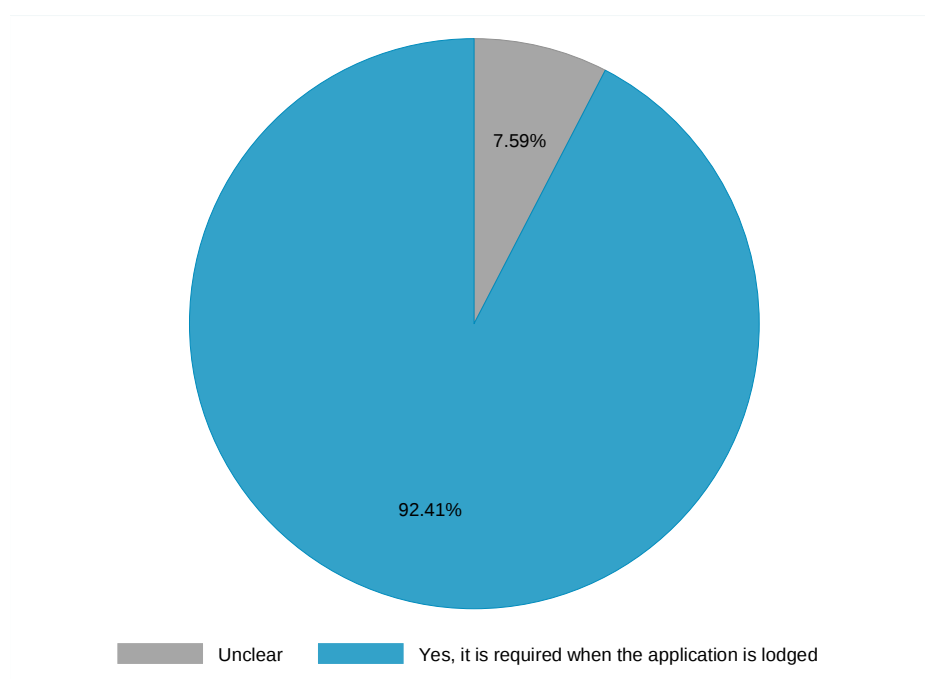
	• The original and a copy of the driver's license • If the vehicle is rented, the original and a copy of the vehicle rent agreement
The Best Practice (in terms of facilitation):	The Dutch Embassy in Riyadh requests a print-out of a flight booking and then if the visa application is approved, the original confirmed return ticket and a copy of the ticket.
The Exception:	The Finnish Consulates in Moscow and Skt. Petersburg do not ask for flight reservations (possibly due to the geographical distance) ¹⁴ .

In addition to the above, several diplomatic representations make use of the possibility to check whether the applicant has had a visa before and whether the conditions where respected. This can provide consulates with insight into the applicant's prior behaviour and contribute to the appreciation of his/hers eligibility with regards to the current visa application.

1.7.5 Documenting Schengen Travel Medical Insurance

There are no general requirements on whether the **medical insurance** should be provided in the shape of one original and one copy thereof. It is a document which as set by the Visa Code is requisite when submitted a visa application at all the representations reviewed and is requested in a standard form including a photocopy of OVERSEAS/travel medical insurance policy. Furthermore, some specify on the website that it must cover repatriation, evacuation and a cover equivalent to EUR 30,000. This requirement on coverage is mandatory. The representation also requests applicants to carry their original insurance card for verification when they submit their visa application. However, many representations do not specify the nature of the documentation other than that a presentation of proof that the applicant is the holder of such insurance.

Figure 9: Proof of travel medical insurance



As uncovered by the review procedure and illustrated in the chart above the medical insurance is almost unanimously required by all consulates in the sample except for six which do not state clearly what the requisite documents are. There was a third option in the Review Scheme namely

¹⁴ Overall it is an exception to not require flight ticket *amongst Schengen Countries*. Therefore it does serve the purpose of demonstrating that flight reservations are not always deemed necessary documentation of 'main destination' or 'intention to return'. The distance argument has its limitations as an explanatory factor, which is why it is in parenthesis. The wavering of flight reservation requirements is not public on all websites or practiced across Member States in a way which can be explained exclusively by distance.

"No, it is not required", but it is not included in the chart since there are no observations on it. Regarding the 7.5 pct. of consulates which do not provide information on the requirement of medical insurance, it should be noted that the requirement remains mandatory in accordance with the Visa Code.

1.7.6 Documenting dependence

As illustrated below, several consulates state no additional requirements for an unemployed spouse. As a dependent would not be able to give proof of regular income, a statement from an employer or perhaps even a bank statement, it could make it unclear how such an applicant can obtain a visa. In turn, this might render it difficult for applicants to assemble their application correctly as they may have a harder time getting access to information on the standard procedure for these cases. As for the cause of the lack of specifications in this case, the reason could be that it is not considered an important segment and that there are only few occurrences of this making it easier to deal with them on a case by case basis. However, so far no evidence has shown this to be the case. Our review shows that this type of documentation is time consuming for applicants to provide the necessary documentation and thus can be a barrier for travelling families.

Table 5: Documenting dependence

	Third-country						Total
	China	India	Saudi Arabia	South Africa	Russia	The Ukraine	
Proof of Family-relations/marriage	0	3	0	4	1	3	11
Proof of ability to cover expenses	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Both of the above	15	1	0	0	0	0	16
None	0	5	7	8	6	7	33
Unclear		5	5	2	2	2	16
Total	15	14	12	14	9	12	

In the table above the practices employed when travellers who have their dependents with them apply for Schengen visas.

An example of this is the French embassy in New Delhi where families have to submit proof of their family ties, the young adults and/or children's school certificate or proof of employment and document the supporting documents of the parents' income. In the case of an applicant who is travelling on the expense of his/her spouse they are required to submit a marriage certificate and supporting documents of the spouse's income¹⁵.

In the table above it is clear that the most comprehensive requirements are in for applicants in China. Two examples of this are the French and Italian representations in China. They specify clearly in what form the documents should be and demand as proof of the ability to cover expenses both the original working certificate of the spouse as well as a translation. While marriage should be evidenced by a notarial marriage certificate certified by the Chinese Ministry Of Foreign Affairs, the original containing translation and a copy¹⁶.

Conversely the French Embassy in Jeddah simply reiterates that all applicants must provide all documentation and does not specify what someone financially dependent on their spouse should provide.

1.8 Requirement to appear in person

This last section covers the stage of the visa application procedure which is at the submission of the application or when the applicant picks-up his/her passport after a decision has been made.

¹⁵ <http://ambafrance-in.org/-Visas,1630->

¹⁶ <https://cn.tlscontact.com/cnCAN2fr/login.php>

The obligation to appear in person at a Schengen diplomatic mission or consulates is covered by the general rule that an applicant must appear in person. However, the Visa Code allows Member States to cooperate with external service providers for the collection of applications and delivery of passports when a decision has been made.

As illustrated by the figure 7, above it is less common that consular websites state that applicants are required to pick up their passport in person than was the case when lodging an application. Nonetheless, on their websites 50 pct. of all the reviewed consulates still request applicants to present themselves in person either directly or indirectly by giving no alternatives.

Figure 10: example - an exception to the requirement to appear in person

An Exception

At the Danish Embassy in New Delhi it is stated that to facilitate the visa application procedure, the Embassy allows the passport to be both lodged and picked up by a messenger with a written authorisation, but reserves the right to call applicants to interviews.