



## Tourism Manifesto welcomes the first EU Visa Strategy<sup>1</sup>

A smart visa strategy is a pre-condition for the success of European inbound tourism. Increasing international visitor numbers is a core objective of the forthcoming sustainable tourism strategy, essential for supporting year-round travel and ensuring the economic resilience of destinations across Europe.

While the Schengen Area remains the world's most visited destination, its continued leadership depends on a framework that is modern, efficient, and competitive. A future-proof visa policy must make legitimate travel easier, faster, and more predictable for leisure and business travellers alike.

### Competitiveness through Better Service

Tourists and business travellers increasingly expect a seamless experience characterized by fast, paperless, and secure procedures. Visa facilitation operates in a highly competitive global context: MICE buyers, leisure operators, and individual travellers are heavily influenced by the complexity of visa requirements and processing—specifically appointment availability, processing times, and documentary burdens. Visitors have options. Europe's attractiveness depends on the quality of the experience offered from the very first point of contact.

### Endorsement of the Strategy

The tourism industry welcomes the first EU Visa Strategy published by the European Commission. We applaud the recognition of visa policy as a vital instrument of EU competitiveness and the confirmation that strengthened security and improved service are compatible; they are not mutually exclusive.

Specifically, we endorse the measures aimed at facilitating legitimate travel to Europe, including:

- Digitalisation: Swift implementation of digital visa procedures by 2028, including EU VAP.
- Longer Validity: Wider issuance of multiple-entry visas (MEVs) with long validity for bona fide applicants to encourage repeat visits.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_26\\_217](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_26_217)

- **Business Facilitation:** Introduction of fast-track processing and simplified procedures for trusted business travellers.
- **Harmonisation:** Consistent application of visa rules across Member States to improve the predictability of decision-making and support the digital rollout.
- **Resources:** Adequate funding to ensure effective implementation, specifically to strengthen staffing, process and infrastructure, thereby increasing capacity.

We also welcome the parallel recommendation to utilise visa policy to attract talent, which will support the sector's diverse workforce needs.

## Going forward

With the roll-out of ETIAS expected in the last quarter of 2026, we encourage Member States to redouble efforts regarding system readiness. Europe must offer a warm, efficient, and reliable welcome to its visitors, from the online application to the border crossing.

By modernising procedures and prioritizing facilitation, the EU Visa Strategy can reinforce Europe's position as the world's leading destination while maintaining high standards of security.

Brussels, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2026

### ***About the Tourism Manifesto***

*We are an alliance of over 70 European public and private organisations, covering the whole tourism value chain and beyond. Together we call on the European Union for action on key policy priorities for the sector.*

***tourismmanifesto.eu***