



IOM

IOM
UN MIGRATION

VISA POLICY

SUPPORT

ENHANCING CAPACITIES BASED ON MIGRATION AND BORDER MANAGEMENT EXPERTISE

Visa policy is an essential component of border and migration management. With a billion people on the move and two-thirds of the world's population requiring a visa, States pursue visa policies to facilitate safe, orderly and regular mobility while maintaining security considerations and reducing the risk of irregular migration. To this end, visas are used to manage the entry and stay of foreign nationals in a country. While there is no internationally recognized definition of a visa, it can be broadly understood as a conditional authorization granted by a country, before or upon arrival, allowing a foreign national to enter and (temporarily) reside in a country. Visas can be issued for a variety of reasons, such as tourism, transit, study, work, family visits and as pathways to permanent residency.

States may choose to waive visa requirements from nationals of certain countries by liberalizing their visa regimes. This is often based on reciprocity or to contribute to trade and tourism. Some States may also choose to establish common visa policies to liberalize visa regimes amongst themselves and harmonize visa requirements vis-à-vis non-participating States. The primary government agencies involved in the formulation and implementation of visa policies are typically national immigration services, ministries of Foreign Affairs, and border control authorities. However, as the choice between visa liberalization and more restrictive visa regimes are competing policy priorities, States often follow a whole-of-government approach to policy formulation so that all interests are duly considered.

With over 65 years of expertise in the field of migration and border management, IOM is well placed to assist national authorities with reforms by developing, evaluating, and enhancing their visa policies, legislation, and procedures through technical assistance and capacity building measures. In addition to policy development, IOM operates over 62 visa application centres on behalf of Member States, resulting in over 200,000 visa applications processed in 2017. This allows IOM to leverage operational insights to assist States throughout the entire visa policy making cycle: from issue identification to policy formulation and legislation drafting, implementation, and evaluation. As the UN Migration Agency, IOM includes 172 Member States, with a further 8 holding observer status and operates local offices in over 100 countries. IOM provides assistance and advice to governments and migrants with the aim of supporting safe, orderly and regular migration while respecting state sovereignty.





DESIGN OF POLICIES & PROCEDURES

With IOM's assistance, States can develop sound visa policies that take into account important factors such as broader migration policies, regional migration trends, trade and development interests, and security concerns. A thorough analysis of these factors should inform policymaking, including the question of who should be subject to visa restrictions and under what conditions.

Effective policies developed with IOM's support are based on international best practices and include gender and human rights considerations while helping to clarify the roles of relevant institutions and the private sector.

To operationalize policies, IOM also assists national authorities to design efficient visa application processes and develop standard operating procedures.



ASSIST IN IMPLEMENTING VISA POLICY

Thanks to its decades of operational experience in visa application management, IOM is well-placed to provide tailor-made assistance to Member States in the implementation of their policies. This support can take various forms, such as independent monitoring of policy implementation, both at the local level as well as globally at the level of consular representations. This monitoring can then be used for data collection and analysis purposes. When needed, IOM can also provide operational assistance, including visa processing support and enhancing fraud detection by helping to verify documentation that visa applicants have provided (e.g. civil status, student, and employment documents).



TRAINING PROGRAMMES

An effective visa policy depends to a large extent on how it is implemented by individuals involved in visa processing and issuance. This requires consular, immigration, and border officials to have up-to-date awareness of visa policies and procedures. IOM can offer Member States training curricula to build capacities in this field, based on international best practices and good governance.



DEVELOP OR IMPROVE VISA RELATED FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

The right technological infrastructure is key to operationalizing visa policy. In addition to policy development, IOM assists states with the physical and technological aspects of visa policy implementation. This includes designing Visa Application Centres, developing e-Visa platforms and application processing software as well as offering an alternative to costly Border Management Information Systems through IOM's affordable, user-friendly and fully customizable Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS).



ASSESS & REVIEW EXISTING POLICIES & PROCEDURES

The dynamics of human mobility and migration are constantly changing, requiring even the most advanced policies and practices to adapt to evolving internal and external factors. To this end, IOM supports States with regular assessments of their visa policies and procedures to identify areas that need review and improvement, in line with national priorities and objectives. This enables States to continue to meet future migration management needs.

