

Entering the EU: Visas & Asylum Pathways

(Quick Guide – 2025)

1. Short-Stay Entry (90 days or less)

Most travelers to the EU for tourism, business, or visiting family will need a Schengen Visa or, from 2026, an ETIAS travel authorization.

Schengen Visa

- Apply at the consulate of your main destination (or first entry country).
- Apply between 15 days and 6 months before travel.
- Cost: €90 adults / €45 children (6–12).
- Processing: 15–45 days.
- Single-entry, multi-entry, and airport transit options available.

ETIAS (launching 2026)

- Online authorization for visa-exempt nationals.
- Cost: €7.
- Valid for 3 years or until passport expiry.

Documents usually required

- Valid passport (6+ months beyond trip).
- Proof of funds & accommodation.
- Travel itinerary.
- Medical insurance.
- Visa application form + ID photo.

2. Long-Stay Entry (over 90 days)

For work, study, or family reunification you'll need a National Visa from the country you plan to live in.

General requirements

- Passport (valid 6+ months after stay).
- Job offer or university acceptance (plus proof of qualifications).
- Health insurance.
- Proof of financial stability & accommodation.
- Police clearance.

Key facts

- Usually valid for 12 months, often renewable.
- Processing time: 6–12 weeks.
- Average fee: ~€120.
- Family members can often accompany you.

- Easiest countries for work visas: Estonia, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland, Czech Republic.

3. Seeking Asylum in the EU

Asylum is governed by the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Where to apply

- You must be inside the country where you are applying.
- Under the Dublin Regulation, you must apply in the first EU country you enter.

Basic criteria

You may apply if you have a well-founded fear of persecution due to:

- Race
- Religion
- Nationality
- Political opinion
- Membership in a protected group (e.g. LGBTQ+)

Your rights

- A personal interview.
- Free legal counseling and representation (including appeals).
- Housing, food, and medical care during the process.

Your obligations

- Cooperate with authorities.
- Provide ID and documents.
- Follow housing center rules.

The Asylum Process

1. Application: Apply at airport immigration or a police station. Authorities will take ID and biometrics.
2. Interview: You'll explain your fear of persecution. Evidence that is specific and personal is strongest.
3. Decision: Initial applications are often denied for Americans (due to "safe country" policy). Don't lose hope—laws, not policies, govern final outcomes.
4. Appeal: Your lawyer can file an appeal. Court hearings may take 4 weeks to 12 months. Judges can overturn initial denials.

Useful Links

- Apply for Schengen Visa (form): https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/d7105f84-984d-4566-ac27-31cad1081b74_en?filename=schengen_visa_application_form_en.pdf
- EU Visa Policy Overview: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen/visa-policy_en
- EU Pact on Migration & Asylum: <https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration->

and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum_en

- Dublin Regulation (EU Asylum Rule): <https://euaa.europa.eu/asylum-knowledge/dublin-procedure>

- Country applications:

Netherlands: <https://ind.nl/en/residence-permits/long-term-eu-residency/apply-for-a-residence-permit-for-long-term-eu-residents> |

Germany: <https://www.germany.info/us-en/service/visa/residence-visa-922288> |

Ireland: <https://www.ireland.ie/en/dfa/visas-for-ireland/> |

Estonia: <https://vm.ee/en/consular-visa-and-travel-information/visa-information/application-long-stay-d-visa>