Introducing Digital Travel Authorization for Electronic Visa in the Republic of Serbia

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Digitalization Milestones in Visa Policy

Key Developments Over Time

- **2012** – Introduction of the **Visa Information System (VIS)** at the MFA and Serbian diplomatic and consular missions, through which visa applications are submitted and visa stickers printed

- **2021** – Online application introduced for **Type D Employment Visas**

- **February 2024** – Launch of the **Portal WelcomeToSerbia** which enabled online applications for **all types of visas**

Impact & Benefits of Digitalization in the Field of Visa Policy

- ✓ Enhanced **efficiency** in processing of visa applications
- ✓ Greater **transparency** in procedures
- ✓ Improved **user experience** for applicants and employers
- ✓ Establishment of a comprehensive **technical framework** for the introduction of the electronic visa into the legal system

Number of visa application

Legal Framework for Visas in Electronic Format

Article 18, Law on Foreigners, 2023

- Visas are issued in an **electronic format** or as **stickers** in passports

- The Law defines a **visa** as a **mandatory authorization** for entry, stay, or transit

- The format of the electronic visa application and the detailed criteria for its issuance shall be established by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Why It Matters

- ✓ Supports **digital transformation** of migration processes
- ✓ Aligns with **international standards** and best practices
- ✓ Reinforces Serbia's commitment to **modern, secure, and efficient** border management

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The Process of Introducing DTA

Key players

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs as holder of the Visa Information System

- The Office for information technologies and eGovernment as holder of WelcomeToSerbia online portal

- Ministry of Interior as holder of national CSCA

Main Challenges

✓ **Security**
Ensuring protection of personal data and preventing unauthorized access or fraud

✓ **Interoperability**
Achieving seamless integration and communication between different systems, agencies, and countries

✓ **Compliance with International Standards**
Adhering to global regulations and standards to facilitate international cooperation and recognition

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DTA as electronic visa

DTA as electronic visa

- Republic of Serbia is a member of Public Key Directory List

- Bar Code Signer (for issuing digital visa) has been issued by CSCA, type ND for visa

- We have chosen to issue BarCodeSigner certificate by CSCA already published in PKD list

- We are using VDS-NC format of 2D bar code

- We have chosen ES256 – as ECDSA with Sha256 hashing algorithm and NIST P-256 ecliptic curve

- extendedKeyUsage = 2.23.136.1.1.14.2 – purpose od Bar Code Certificate is DocumentSigner

- Validity period 6 years

- Validity QR code – directs to the web link where validity could be checked

- Digital Seal is used to protect the integrity of the whole PDF file

DIGITAL VISA INFRASTRUCTURE – REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
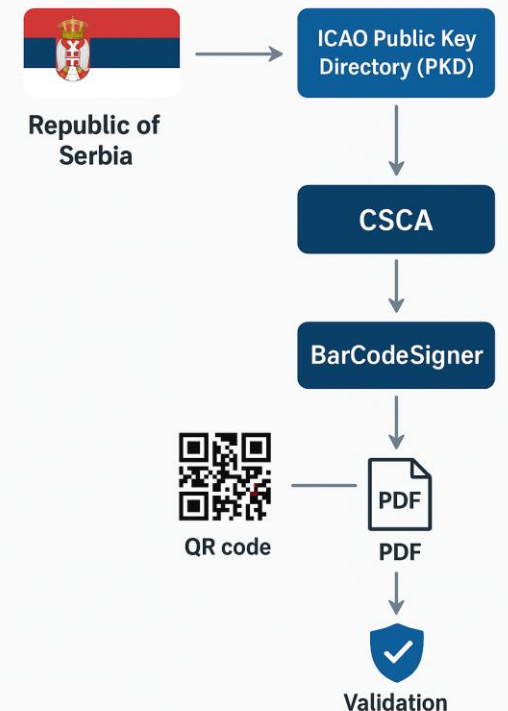
How have we addressed the main challenges

1. Security

- Data on electronic visa are signed with BarCodeSigner issued by CSCA and generated in 2D bar code
- Electronic visa validity can be check online
- PDF file is signed with digital seal, protecting the whole document from any changes

2. Interoperability

- Visa data is readable at all international border crossings as Serbia is a member of PKD, in the same manner as ePassport
- Accessible to airlines and transport companies for streamlined check-in and boarding
- Facilitates seamless international travel procedures
- Informing host countries about the launch and features of the DTA system

3. Compliance with International Standards

- Fully aligned with ICAO Document TECHNICAL REPORT VDS-NC Visible Digital Seal for non-constrained environments Version – 1.4 implemented in cooperation with IATA/Timatic for worldwide recognition
- Ensures Serbia's integration into the global mobility system

Outcome:

Secure. Efficient. Globally accepted.

Process of Visa Application and Issuing of Electronic Visa
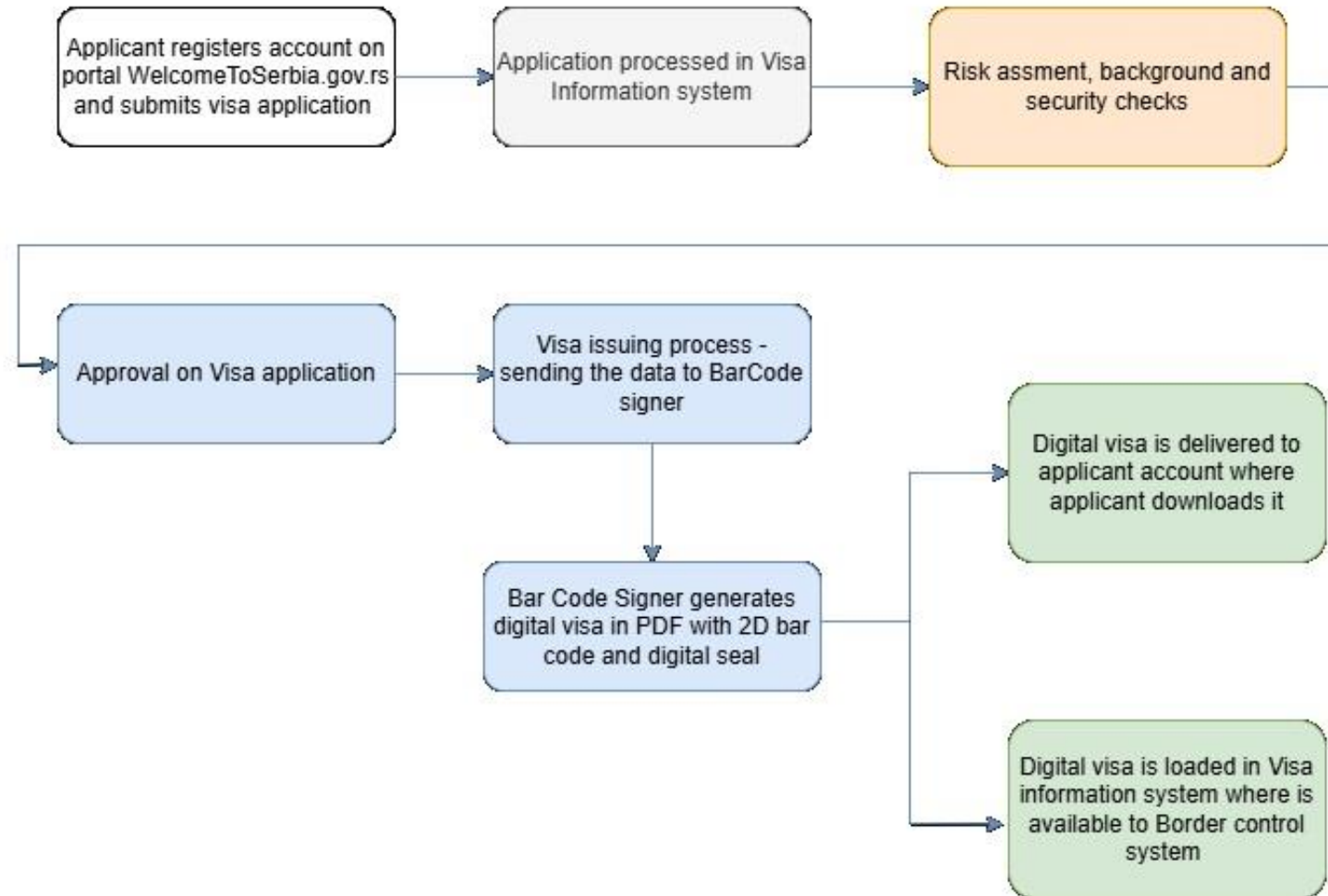
DTA as electronic visa

➢ DTA can be downloaded only on WelcomeToSerbia.gov.rs portal

➢ When a document is downloaded, the portal records the time of download and forwards the information to the Visa Information System, which as such becomes available to the border control system

➢ Document can be printed or saved on a mobile device

➢ Security of the document is the same as for ePassport
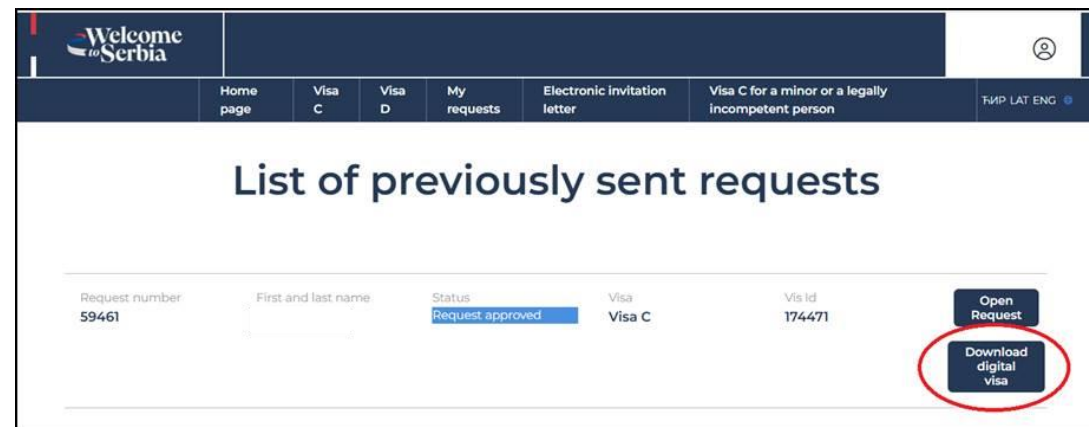
Perceived benefits once DTA becomes fully operational

➤ **Reduced workload** at diplomatic or consular posts. Staff can now focus more on complex aspects of visa-related tasks

➤ **Reduced costs** through a more effective process and facilitated visa sticker management

➤ **Improved coordination** within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - benefits from centralized digital monitoring of
visa applications and issued visas and real-time data sharing with border authorities

➤ **Faster policy adjustments** and better insight into travel trends and migration patterns

➤ **Enhanced transparency and control** and more flexibility for visa cancelation process

➤ **Reduced risk of procedural errors**, loss of documents or unauthorized handling

➤ **Better data management**, simplified record-keeping and analysis, better integration with border control and immigration systems

Outcomes of using DTA in practice by now

➢ High-level Document Security – DTA includes QR code verification and an encrypted digital signature. No attempted forgeries or fraud detected during this initial phase

➢ Interoperability Between Institutions - Real-time data sharing between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, border police, and airport authorities

➢ Simplified Process and Better User Experience for Applicants - Applicants receive digital DTA without need to go to diplomatic post for a visa sticker and can check validity of visa anytime, without the need to contact the MFA, a diplomatic post or border authorities, which has led to higher satisfaction rates and positive feedback

➢ Enhanced Security and Efficiency in Air Transport - Air service providers can easily verify the authenticity of DTA by scanning QR codes, significantly reducing the risk of boarding unauthorized travelers

➢ Strong Foundation for Full Implementation - The initial phase has demonstrated high efficiency, security, and user satisfaction, paving the way for full-scale rollout

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Further steps in the process of DTA implementation

➢ Automatic process of validation of DTA of other countries (ICAO compliant) in visa processing

➢ Introducing DTA as type D electronic visa for EXPO 2027

➢ Continued need for system upgrades, cybersecurity, and training of consular staff

➢ Biometrics integration remains a key goal for further digitalization

➢ We are open to exchanging experiences with other countries

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Thank you for your attention

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