



Decision on the use of automated decision-making: First residence permits for studies

Decision

The Finnish Immigration Service will introduce automated decision-making for applications for a first residence permit for studies. This Decision replaces the earlier implementation decision, MIG-2414515, which was approved on 22 May 2024 and applied to the same decision-making procedure. This Decision becomes applicable on the day of implementation.

Applications are only subject to the automated decision-making if the customer applies for a residence permit for studies leading to a degree or for student exchange in a higher education institution, within the meaning of Directive (EU) 2016/801, and if the residence permit can be granted according to the application, and the matter does not require more extensive overall consideration.

The automated decision-making procedure will be implemented as of 3 June 2026. Applications that have become pending after 19 October 2023 can be decided automatically.

The decision on an application will comply with the version of the implementation decision and the processing rules that are valid at the time when the application is decided.

Reasons

Introduction

The Finnish Immigration Service has assessed the requirements for introducing automated decision-making with this Decision. The lawfulness of personal data processing and respecting data subjects' rights are accounted for in the introduction of automated decision-making, as are the requirements laid down in legislation for automated decision-making, its introduction, and the processes to be complied with.

The conditions laid down in the Administrative Procedure Act (434/2003), in the Aliens Act (301/2004) and in the Act on the Conditions of Entry and Residence of Third-Country Nationals for the Purposes of Research, Studies, Training and Voluntary Service (719/2018; hereinafter 'Researcher and Student Act') for processing and deciding applications for a first residence permit for studies are observed.

Processing of personal data

The Finnish Immigration Service processes personal data in accordance with section 1, subsection 1, paragraph 1 of the act on the processing of personal data in the field of immigration administration (laki henkilötietojen käsittelystä maahanmuuttohallinnossa 615/2020). Data is processed in connection with processing cases related to the entry into, departure from and residence in Finland of foreign nationals, and the related decision-making and supervision.

The processing is based on Article 6(1)(c) of the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (hereinafter 'GDPR'), meaning the processing is necessary for compliance with a legal obligation.

Requirements for automated decision-making under the Administrative Procedure Act

The requirements for automated decision-making are laid down in the Administrative Procedure Act. According to section 53e of said Act, authorities may automatically decide on cases that do not include complex factors requiring case-specific deliberation. Cases can also be automatically decided on if an official or other party processing the case has reviewed the factors of the case that require case-specific deliberation. Automated decision-making must be based on processing rules that the authority has created based on applicable laws and prior assessment.

Automated decision-making at the Finnish Immigration Service is based on norms and rules. Authorities must carry out a prior assessment regarding which matters can be subjected to automated decision-making, and identify the factors that are often repeated in the cases processed by the authority ('standard cases'), which the authority deems should always be decided on according to the same rule. The Finnish Immigration Service carried out a prior assessment on which of the applications subject to this Decision can be justly decided on automatically.

In the case of applications for a residence permit for studies, the above-mentioned standard cases identified by the Finnish Immigration Service are applications from students falling within the scope of Directive (EU) 2016/81 who are coming to Finland to study as degree students or exchange students at higher education institutions.

Automated decision-making will be used to decide applications based on which a residence permit can be granted as applied for and when the case does not require a more extensive overall consideration. The Finnish Immigration Service has created processing rules for the automated decision-making as required by the Act on Information Management in Public Administration (906/2019, hereinafter 'Information Management Act'). The processing rules contain the requirements that must be met before a residence permit can be granted and before the matter can be automatically decided. The processing rules also contain the requirements based on which an application is referred to an official for processing. In such a case, an official will assess and decide the factors of the case that require case-specific deliberation and may, in some cases, choose to return the matter to the automated decision-making procedure.

The processing rules contain thresholds that have been defined for the standard cases. The thresholds determine which cases are always referred to an official. The thresholds are based on either a need for more extensive overall consideration or a need for technical register entries that require action from an official. An application will automatically be excluded from automated decision-making due to a need for overall consideration if, for instance, the applicant has been heard pursuant to section 64 of the Aliens Act when he or she applied for the permit or if the person who received the application has made a processing note regarding the case.

In addition, automated decision-making is limited to applications that have been submitted through the online service of the Finnish Immigration Service from abroad. In addition, the following limitations have been imposed on automated decision-making to determine which applications are excluded from automated decision-making:

- the studies have started 45 days before the decision is made
- the applicant's family member is applying for a residence permit at the same time
- the applicant participates in an EU mobility programme during the permit period in question
- the permit is applied for a period longer than the duration of the applicant's right to study or only for a short period
- the applicant does not have a valid right to study.

Applicants who have a non-disclosure for personal safety reasons are excluded from automated decision-making. Processing of data that is subject to a non-disclosure for personal safety reasons requires special care, which is why automated processing of such data is restricted

The Finnish Immigration Service has taken into account in the processing rules that an application cannot be decided automatically before the person who applies for a residence permit has personally proven his or her identity or before the necessary checks in official registers have been made.

The Finnish Immigration Service does not use algorithms based on artificial intelligence in decision-making; instead, the processing is based on rules. Automatically made decisions are based on the requirements for granting residence permits defined in legislation and for which processing rules can be programmed in the Finnish Immigration Service's case management system for immigration matters.

Section 53f of the Administrative Procedure Act lays down a requirement to provide a legal remedy. According to the requirement, decisions related to a natural person can be automatically made only if the natural person in question is provided with the means to request a review of the decision, and the authority that issued the decision or another authority who is a joint controller of the issuing authority must process the request for review. However, this is not required if the automatically decided case pertains to a request from the party concerned that does not relate to any other party concerned.

Pursuant to this Decision, the Finnish Immigration Service automatically decides on applications in which the applicant's request is granted and that

do not fall outside the scope of automated decision-making according to what is outlined in this document above. In the case of residence permits for studies, applications that can be automatically decided on always apply to only one party concerned. Therefore, the decisions can be issued without providing the means to request for a review.

Section 53g of the Administrative Procedure Act requires informing of automated decisions. An automated decision issued by virtue of this Decision will contain a statement that the case was subject to automated decision-making under the terms of section 53e of the Administrative Procedure Act. The decision will contain the address of the Finnish Immigration Service's web page where this Decision on the use of automated decision-making is available.

Requirements for the introduction and use of automated decision-making laid down in the Act on Information Management in Public Administration

Chapter 6 a of the Act on Information Management in Public Administration (906/2019, hereinafter 'Information Management Act') lays down the requirements for the documentation, quality assurance, quality control and introduction of automated decision-making and describes how the authorities' liability on the automated decision-making is distributed.

According to section 28a of the Information Management Act, authorities must document the division of the duties of the persons who are responsible for the fulfilment of the responsibilities related to the introduction and use of automated decision-making. In addition, authorities must ensure that the processing rules are documented in a manner that enables proving their compliance. The processing rules must indicate how non-discrimination of the rules is ensured, how the cases are examined appropriately and to a sufficient extent, and how the decisions are justified or why they can be left unjustified. The authority must ensure that for at least five years after a decision is issued, it can be determined what processing rules were used to automatically decide on the case and at what stages a natural person has contributed to the processing of the case. The Finnish Immigration Service has issued separate orders that document the persons responsible for the fulfilment of the responsibilities.

The Finnish Immigration Service has created extensive processing rules for the automated decision-making. The Finnish Immigration Service's processing rules meet the requirements laid down in the Information Management Act. The processing rules were designed to be such that the requirements for good governance are met and fundamental rights are respected in the automated decision-making. The processing rules specify how residence permit applications are processed and decided on. The processing rules specify the actions performed by officials on applications, when verifying some matter requires deliberation from an official, and the conditions for returning an application to automated decision-making.

The processing rules enable proving that the introduction of the automated decision-making meets all the legislative requirements discussed in this Decision.

In addition, the Finnish Immigration Service has ensured that for at least five years after a decision is issued, it can be determined what processing rules were used to automatically decide on the case and at what stages an official has contributed to the processing of the case.

Under section 28b of the Information Management Act, before an automated decision-making procedure is introduced or when it is adjusted, the authority in question must ensure that the procedure complies with the documentation required under section 28a, subsection 2 of the Information Management Act, meaning the processing rules defined for the procedure. The authority must ensure that the language of automatically produced documents presented to the party concerned is appropriate and that the key quality control measures have been documented.

Before the introduction, the Finnish Immigration Service has verified that the processing rules work and that the automated decision-making procedure is compliant with its documentation. A separate report was drafted on the testing of the processing rules and the results of the testing. In connection with the testing, it was ensured that the language of the documents produced in connection with the automated decision-making, such as the decision document itself, is appropriate. Under section 28c of the Information Management Act, authorities must monitor the quality of automatically made decisions and the accuracy of their content.

The Finnish Immigration Service has documented the procedures for implementing quality control after the introduction of automated decision-making. Quality control will be carried out according to the plan by manually reviewing randomly selected applications. In addition, the Finnish Immigration Service has documented the procedures for the handling and control of possible incidents.

Requirements laid down in the Researcher and Student Act and in the Aliens Act

Under section 27 of the Researcher and Student Act, the Finnish Immigration Service grants a residence permit for studies if the requirements for granting the permit are met. Under section 3 of the Researcher and Student Act, the provisions of the Aliens Act are applied to entering and departing Finland, and residing and working in Finland, unless otherwise provided for in the Researcher and Student Act.

The automated decisions on granting a residence permit for studies are based on processing rules that are created by the Finnish Immigration Service and that comply with the Researcher and Student Act and the Aliens Act. When formulating the processing rules, the Finnish Immigration Service has ensured that the automated decision-making procedure will lead to a result that complies with these Acts in each matter that is decided on automatically.

Data protection legislation

The GDPR requires national legislation for deciding individual cases automatically. According to Article 22 of the GDPR, data subjects have the right to not be subject to a decision based solely on automated processing. However, the prohibition on automated decision-making is not applied if it is authorised by EU or Member State legislation to which the controller is subject and which also lays down suitable measures to safeguard the data subject's rights and freedoms and legitimate interests.

The Finnish legislation on automated decision-making in public administration entered into force on 1 May 2023, and the Finnish Immigration Service complies with this legislation in its introduction of automated decision-making. The legal basis for the legislation on automated decision-making is laid down in chapter 8b of the Administrative Procedure Act and chapter 6a of the Information Management Act. The legislation establishes safeguards for automated decision-making. The provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act authorise authorities to make decisions automatically within the limits set in the chapter.

Right to obtain human intervention

In the GDPR, one of the safeguards required for automated decision-making is that data subjects have the right to obtain human intervention in the data processing.

The request for review referred to in section 53f of the Administrative Procedure Act is deemed to meet the GDPR's requirement for a sufficient safeguard as it meets the discussed requirements. If no provisions on the right to request review exist, the requirement to provide a legal remedy can be met by any legal remedy equal to the right to request review laid down in an act. According to section 53f, subsection 2 of the Administrative Procedure Act, the requirement to provide a legal remedy is not applied if the automated decision-making is used to approve a request from the party concerned that does not relate to any other party concerned. If the request from the party concerned is approved in the required manner, the party concerned no longer has a need to obtain human intervention as a safeguard under data protection legislation (HE 145/2022, page 154).

No provisions exist on requests for review in matters under the purview of the Finnish Immigration Service. The safeguard required by the GDPR is implemented by automatically deciding cases where a student is applying for a first residence permit and the residence permit can be granted based on the application.

Information on automated decision-making and prior information

The GDPR and Finland's national legislation include provisions that require that data subjects are informed when a decision they are subject to is made or may be made automatically. The obligation to inform and the procedures related to it are laid down in Articles 12 to 14 of the GDPR. If an automated decision is issued in a case, section 53g of the Administrative Procedure Act requires that the decision includes the information that the case was subject

to automated decision-making and the information about where the decision to introduce automated decision-making required by section 28d of the Information Management Act is available.

When introducing automated decision-making, the Finnish Immigration Services has ensured that the person who applies for the residence permit is informed of the automated decision-making before becoming subject to it, as required by the GDPR. The person who applies for the permit will be provided with the required information on the possible use of automated decision-making through the online service of the Finnish Immigration Service and on the Finnish Immigration Service's website.

When the applicant starts filling in an application for a residence permit for studies in the Finnish Immigration Service's online service Enter Finland, the applicant will be informed that their case may be subject to automated decision-making and that the decision will follow the processing rules that are in force at the time when the decision is made. The information provided does not directly state that the applicant's application will be subject to automated decision-making, because at that stage of the application process, it cannot be reliably determined yet. The applicant will be told that further information about automated decision-making is available on the website of the Finnish Immigration Service.

The Finnish Immigration Service informs applicants of the automated decision-making, the principles of the automated decision-making, and other matters relevant to customers' rights on its website at migri.fi/automated-decision. This Decision to introduce automated decision-making will also be available on the page. The page serves as a contact point for the authorities, and it includes more detailed information on communication channels for requesting more information and making information requests.

Automatically issued decisions will state that the decision was made automatically and will state where the decision on the use of automated decision-making required under section 28d of the Information Management Act is available.

Children

Under section 6 of the Aliens Act, special attention shall be paid to the best interest of the child and to circumstances related to the child's development and health in any decisions taken under the Aliens Act that concern a child under 18 years of age. According to the Finnish Immigration Service's permit procedure guidance, even an applicant under the age of 18 may submit an application but the child's parent's or guardian's consent for the child to move to Finland must always be attached to the application. The consent of the parent or guardian will be verified when the application is being processed, and an assessment of the best interest of the child will be made in connection with the verification.

The automated decision-making procedure is not specifically targeted at children. Instead, the decisions are directed at persons with legal capacity and persons without legal capacity equally. The processing is always based on legislation and must follow the principle of equality.

Documents on which this Decision is based

This Decision is based on documents with which the Finnish Immigration Service has fulfilled the requirements for the introduction of automated decision-making laid down in the Information Management Act.

- Order on division of duties of persons responsible for fulfilment of the responsibilities laid down in the Act on Information Management in Public Administration (MIG-2425377 and MIG-2537405)
- General description of the processing rules (MIG-2616826)
- Quality assurance plan (MIG-2616927)
- Quality control plan (MIG-2616928)

Retention

In accordance with section 28d of the Information Management Act, this Decision to introduce automated decision-making is retained for at least five years from the start of the following year in which the automated decision-making is decommissioned.

Appeal

Under section 6, subsection 2 of the Administrative Judicial Procedure Act (808/2019), this Decision is ineligible for review by appeal.

More information

More information on the automated decision-making procedure can be requested by email at migri@migri.fi.

Director

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The document has been electronically signed in the case management system. Finnish Immigration Service 01 June 2026 at 08:56. The authenticity of the signature can be verified by the Registry