

US Embassy's "Group Visa Application Process"

The process outlined below pertains to getting visas for members of an official delegation from a Transylvanian church to visit its partner church in the US. It provides detailed instructions for the US Embassy's "Group Visa Application Process" which is an embassy-defined process allowing multiple applicants to apply together as an official delegation/group. Each of the applicants must have a valid, unexpired Romanian passport prior to applying for their visa. The Transylvanian delegation must have an "official" leader who will be the "Group Leader" for this process and related communications.

1. An invitation letter is written by the US partner church. It must be on original official church letterhead, be addressed to the "official" Group Leader of the Transylvanian partner delegation and be written by an "official" of the church, i.e. Minister, PCC Chair, etc. It must include the purpose of the visit, the approximate dates and length of the visit, a list of the members of the delegation to be invited, including their affiliation and/or office within the church, and the names, addresses and phone numbers of the host families in the US.
2. The Group Leader requests supporting letters from the Bishop of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church, and the President/Executive Director of the UU Partner Church Council. Originals are required.
3. All Visa applicants must go to a local Bank of Transylvania branch and pay \$11 for a pin number. Only 1 pin number is required for each family group (e.g., husband/wife, parent(s)/child(ren)). This number is used to identify the applicant(s) during the visa application process.
4. The Group Leader calls the Consulate and uses his/her pin to speak to a consulate employee. At the time of this writing there is a Hungarian speaker in the Consulate. The automated voice system gives the caller the option of choosing to speak to someone in the language of their choice. Hungarian is #4. The \$11 provides 7 minutes of talk time. If the 7 minutes are used up the talk time can be recharged.
5. The Group Leader explains to the consulate officer that they wish to coordinate a group interview. The Consulate provides a special email address to which the group leader sends a list of the applicants, their pin numbers, passport numbers, and birth dates.
6. The Consulate replies to the Group Leader with a special form which the Group Leader completes. This form identifies for the Consulate: the Group Leader, group identity, participants, & affiliation in a standard format. If any of the applicants are under 18 a parent will need to be listed and be present at the interview even if that parent is not one of the prospective travelers.
7. The Consulate and the Group Leader agree on the interview time for the group. Earlier in the day is usually better.
8. Each applicant must go online and complete their individual visa applications. The computer used to complete the application will need Adobe Acrobat reader. It is best to use the Romanian version. The application form asks the standard personal information - name, address, phone number, date of birth, employer, school status, marital status, etc. It also asks for the name, address, and phone number of the US host where they will stay, and for the length of the visit. It also asks who is paying for the trip and the purpose of the visit. The form only allows for a 4 line response to this last question. For the Marosvasarhely church we wrote "this is an official church delegation from the 1st Unitarian Church of TG-Mures that will travel to the United States to visit our partner church, the Winchester Unitarian Society of Winchester, MA".
9. Each applicant prints the completed 2-page "NonImmigrant Visa Application" and the 1 page "Supplement to NonImmigrant Visa Application". This second form contains an important barcode and barcode number. There's another supplemental form which 16 - 25 year-old males must complete.
10. Once the forms are completed, the applicants go to the Bank of Transylvania. Each applicant (not family group) must pay the \$131 interview/visa fee.
11. Prior to the date of the interview each applicant should assemble in a clear envelope:

- Application + 1 photo. Do not glue the photo to the application and be sure to trim the photo so as to leave a border around it.
- Men between the ages of 16-25 will also need a supplemental application
- A copy of the original invitation letter from the NA partner church.
(the group leader should retain the original).
- A copy of the letter from the Bishop of the TUC stating that this is an official delegation of the church which is authorized by the authority of the Unitarian HQ.
- A copy of a letter from the UUPCC officers stating the same.
- proof of payment for the \$131 application/interview fee.
- the applicants passport.

In a second transparent envelope the applicant should place:

- any old passports which document foreign travel.
- deeds for houses, apartments, cars
- proof of employment
- salary statements
- statement from parents for children under 18.

12 The day of the interview:

1. Arrive at the Consulate 1/2 hour before the appointment time.
2. An officer with a list will be present and will call the names in the order of the appointment times.
3. Follow the instructions for clearing security and the metal detector. Assuming you have a secure place to do so it is best to leave behind extra items such as cellphones, purses, back packs & keys.
4. Family groups will be interviewed together. Otherwise everyone will be interviewed separately.
5. Applicants who are granted visas will receive a small green paper. If the successful applicant does not want to remain in Bucharest overnight and return the next day for their passport with American visa they should request the CAR-GUS option. (CARGUS is a Romanian courier service)
6. Up to 7 applicants or 1 family group can submit a CAR-GUS application. This is a special secure shipping option that will get the passports and visas to the successful applicants within a few days.