

Visa facilitation for citizens of Albania

Easier travel to the EU becomes a reality for the citizens of Albania - this is what the visa facilitation agreement between the EU and Albania stands for. The purpose of the new visa regime is to facilitate the issuance of **short-stay visas** to persons who hold the nationality of Albania. This should make the European perspective of Albania more tangible to its citizens. Visa facilitation is a first concrete step towards the visa free travel regime.

The visa facilitation agreement has advantages for all nationals of Albania travelling to the EU in the form of a low visa fee rate (35 € instead of the generally applicable rate of 60 €) and speedier handling of visa applications (maximum 10 days as a main rule). It has also advantages for broad groups in the form of simplified document requirements for the purpose of the journey and clear rules on when multiple entry visas can be granted. For certain categories of people such as students and pensioners visas will be given free of charge.

This brochure provides **basic information** for interested applicants about the rules and principles for issuing short-stay visas. EU Member States will take steps to ensure that all existent arrangements are in line with the letter and the spirit of the visa facilitation agreement and should make additional detailed information available on the web sites of their consular services. Additional information will also be available on the web site of the EC Delegation in Tirana (http://www.delalb.ec.europa.eu/en/visa_facilitation) and on the website of the government of Albania..

1. Short-stay visa

- *Do you intend to stay in an EU Member State or in several EU Member States for **no more than 90 days** per period of 180 days?*
- *Do you intend to transit through the territory of one or several EU Member States?*

Then, you need a **short-stay visa**, which means an authorization issued by an EU Member State for you to stay in or transit through this country or several Member States.

Important information

The new visa facilitation rules apply to all EU member states, **except** UK, Ireland and Denmark. Albania intends to conclude separate agreements with similar content as the EU agreement with these countries as well as with Norway and Iceland.

Where to apply?

- You can apply for a visa to the consular services of the EU member state where you intend to make a short stay.
- For a short stay in more than one EU member state, you need to address yourself to the consulate of the **main destination country**.
- In case it is difficult to determine the main destination, you should go to the consulate of **the first entry into the Schengen area**.

What are the minimum requirements to apply for a visa?

You must:

- Complete and sign a visa application form.
- Present a passport which will be valid at least three months after the visa requested is due to expire.
- Specify the means of transport you intend to use.
- Demonstrate sufficient means of subsistence for your journey and for the return trip.
- Demonstrate that you have a health insurance valid for the trip.
- **Describe the purpose and circumstances of your visit.**

The new visa facilitation rules concern this last point:

The examples listed hereafter give a number of case studies for your orientation. Please note that this list is given for your guidance only and is not meant to be exhaustive. If you belong to one of the following categories, only the document(s) listed below can be requested for justifying the purpose of your journey; no other justification, invitation or validation is required. However, all other requirements necessary for obtaining a visa such as presenting documents on your means of subsistence, remain unchanged by the new agreement and need to be checked with the consulate where you intend to apply for a visa.

<i>Purpose of your short stay in an EU member state</i>	<i>If you are....:</i>	<i>... then you have to justify the purpose of your journey by presenting:</i>
<u>Professional</u>	... a business person a written request from a host legal person or company or public authority, endorsed by the Chamber of Commerce of your country.
	... participating in international exhibitions, conferences, symposia, seminars a written request from the host organisation.
	...a pupil, student or an accompanying teacher a written request or certificate of enrolment from the host university, college or school.
	...participating in scientific, cultural, artistic or sports eventsa written request from the host organisation.

<u>Private</u>	... a close relative – spouse, child, or parent of a citizen of your country legally residing in an EU Member State...	... a written request from the relative you intend to visit.
	... a person who intends to visit an EU Member State for medical reasons or a necessary accompanying person...	... an official document of the medical institution and proof of sufficient financial means to pay for the medical treatment.
	...travelling for tourisma certificate or voucher from a travel agency or a tour operator.
	...attending a burial ceremony an official document confirming the fact of death, as well as confirmation of the family or other relationship.

Important information

Please note that EU or national law continue to apply to all issues that are not covered by the visa facilitation agreements, such as: the refusal to issue a visa, recognition of travel documents, the general requirement to appear personally if submitting a visa application, the possibility in case of doubts to invite applicants for a personal interview in individual cases, the refusal of entry and expulsion measures but also the existing flexibilities for bona fide travelers.

2. Multiple-entry short-stay visa

A **multiple-entry short stay visa** to the EU shall be issued to you, *valid up to one year*, **if**

- during the previous year you have obtained at least one visa,
- you have made use of it in accordance with the laws on entry and stay of the visited EU Member State,
- you regularly travel to EU Member States and are a:
 - **business person**
 - member of the **professions participating in international exhibitions, conferences, symposia, seminars or other similar events**
 - person needing to visit regularly for **medical reasons** or necessary accompanying person;
 - person regularly participating in **scientific, cultural, sports or artistic activities**
 - **student** who regularly travels for the purposes of study or educational training;

A multiple-entry short-stay visa to the EU shall be issued to you, *valid for a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 5 years*, **if**

- you belong to one of the categories of persons above,
- during the previous two years you have made use of one-year multiple-entry visas in accordance with the laws on entry and stay of the visited EU Member State and
- the reasons for requesting a multiple-entry visa are still valid.

3. How much do you need to pay for your short-stay visa application?

The fee for processing your visa application amounts to **35 euro**. This fee concerns both single and multiple-entry visas.

The following categories of persons benefit from charge-free visa:

- **Close relatives**
- Persons who have presented documents proving the necessity of their travel on **humanitarian grounds**, including to receive **urgent medical treatment** and the person accompanying such person, or to attend a funeral of a close relative or to visit a seriously ill close relative.
- **Pensioners.**
- **Children under 6** years of age.
- **Disabled persons** and the person accompanying them, if necessary.
- **Pupils, students and accompanying teachers** who undertake trips for the purposes of study or educational training, including in the framework of exchange programmes, as well as other school-related activities.
- Persons participating in **scientific, cultural, sports and artistic activities**, including university and other exchange programmes.

4. How long will the procedures for processing your visa application take?

The diplomatic mission and consular posts of the EU Member States shall take a decision on the request to issue a visa **within 10 calendar days** of the date of the receipt of the application and documents required.

This period of time may be reduced to 3 working days or less in **urgent cases**. It may be extended to up to 30 calendar days in individual cases, in particular when further scrutiny of the application is needed.